



VII Global Labour University Conference
28 – 30 September 2011
Johannesburg, South Africa

The Politics of Labour and Development

Conference Reader

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Introductory Note

“The Politics of Labour and Development “

The global free market vision and the policies that stemmed from it have lead us into the biggest crisis of a century. The ensuing short-lived dream of painless Keynesian crisis management is over. It is time to wake up. Those who caused the crisis show no sense of responsibility let alone willingness to change course; on the contrary, they have tried to seize the opportunity to dismantle what remains of labour market protection and welfare provisions.

During the first wave of the crisis, governments footed the bill in order to save the financial system and avoid a total collapse. In doing so, however, they failed to exploit the acute weakness of the financial sector to address its dysfunctions, and instead revitalized the “monster” (Horst Köhler, former Head of the IMF) through a huge money transfer from public coffers. In place of thanking their saviors, the banks turned their “weapons of financial mass destruction” against them.

It reads like a Franz Kafka script. The markets do not trust the banks, therefore the banks need public funds; subsequently the markets do not trust the indebted governments, hence the banks request higher interest payments for government bonds, which pushes governments closer to default. Now markets no longer trust the banks, who hold the government bonds, therefore the banks need to be recapitalised with new public funds from the remaining solvent governments, which will wittle down the trust that markets have even in these governments, and so on. If that cycle is reasonable and rational, then what does insanity look like?

This deep capitalist crisis has by no means caused a crisis of capitalism. Instead, we continue to hear that there is no alternative to subordinating our lives and societies under the imperatives of global financial markets. Instead of seeing the economy moving towards recovery, people are facing a wide range of pro-cyclical austerity measures and a renewed call for deregulation. Working people and the environment Meanwhile, the bill for this crisis was shifted to. Case in point: President Obama has just agreed not to tax the rich and abandoned tighter industrial smog regulations in the name of revitalizing the economy.

There is no shortage of theoretical concepts of what needs to happen instead. In short, we need fairer income distribution and private and public investment geared towards inclusive societies and an environmentally sustainable economy. Given that 0,5% of the world population owns 35% of its wealth, it is also pretty clear where the money needs to come from. The massive concentration of wealth in the hands of the very few is an expression of tax policy failure in the last decades. This can only be corrected through progressive taxes on current income, as well as on accumulated wealth.

The problem is not a lack of ideas, but rather a lack of power. It is this question of power that is at the center of the VII Annual Global Labour University Conference. The financial elites show great skill and determination in defending the edifice of irresponsibility that has been so incredibly profitable for them. Nothing indicates that they have the slightest willingness to sacrifice anything for the common good. For the forces of reason and fairness to prevail, a broad-based coalition for social justice and environmental sustainability is required, that puts societies before profits and not vice versa.

The massive wave of protest that is sweeping through the world shows that TINA (There Is No Alternative) is losing its grip on the minds of the people. The fairy tale that the best way to help the poor is to make the rich richer as quickly as possible has lost its appeal,

The challenge now is to transform the widespread sense of dissatisfaction, frustration and protest into policies and power that can achieve the changes that are so urgently required. Historically, trade unions have often been a central pillar of progressive coalitions for change. The ability to collectively withdraw their labour is ultimately one of the greatest sources of power that ordinary people have. In times of crisis however, trade unions have also found themselves faced with difficult choices: the policy choice between adaptation and resistance; the strategic choice between highly risky industrial conflict and potentially disempowering concession bargaining; the choice between focusing more narrowly on protecting their members, or advancing a broader policy agenda for social justice inclusive of all workers. Such decisions are never easy, and second best solutions are all too often the best unions could hope for. It is always easier to identify mistakes and wrong choices in retrospect, but nothing is further from the truth when decisions actually have to be made.

We hope this year's GLU Conference can contribute to a discussion on how to proactively deal with these dilemmas and choices when they need to be made, and how to identify policies and practices that can effectively shift the balance of power back towards the people.

Frank Hoffer
ILO/ACTRAV

Practical Information

Conference Venues:

The Professional Development Hub,

92 Empire Road, Corner Empire & Jan Smuts Avenue, Braamfontein

Entrance to venue is on Empire Road.

Contact Person : Ms Eunice Sediti Eunice.Sediti@wits.ac.za Tel : 011 717 4597

Mealtimes & Coffee Breaks (Venue : PDH Foyer)

Arrival tea	29 th September	08h00
	30 th September	08h30
Coffee Breaks	Mid-morning	10h45 – 11h15
	Mid-afternoon	15h45 – 16h15
Lunch times	28 th September	13h00 – 14h00
	29 th September	13h00 – 14h00
	30 th September	13h00 – 14h00
Dinners:	28 th September	20h00
	29 th September	19h30
	30 th September	18h00

Emergency Numbers:

University Campus Control	011 717 9444
University Campus Health Services	011 717 9111

Transportation:

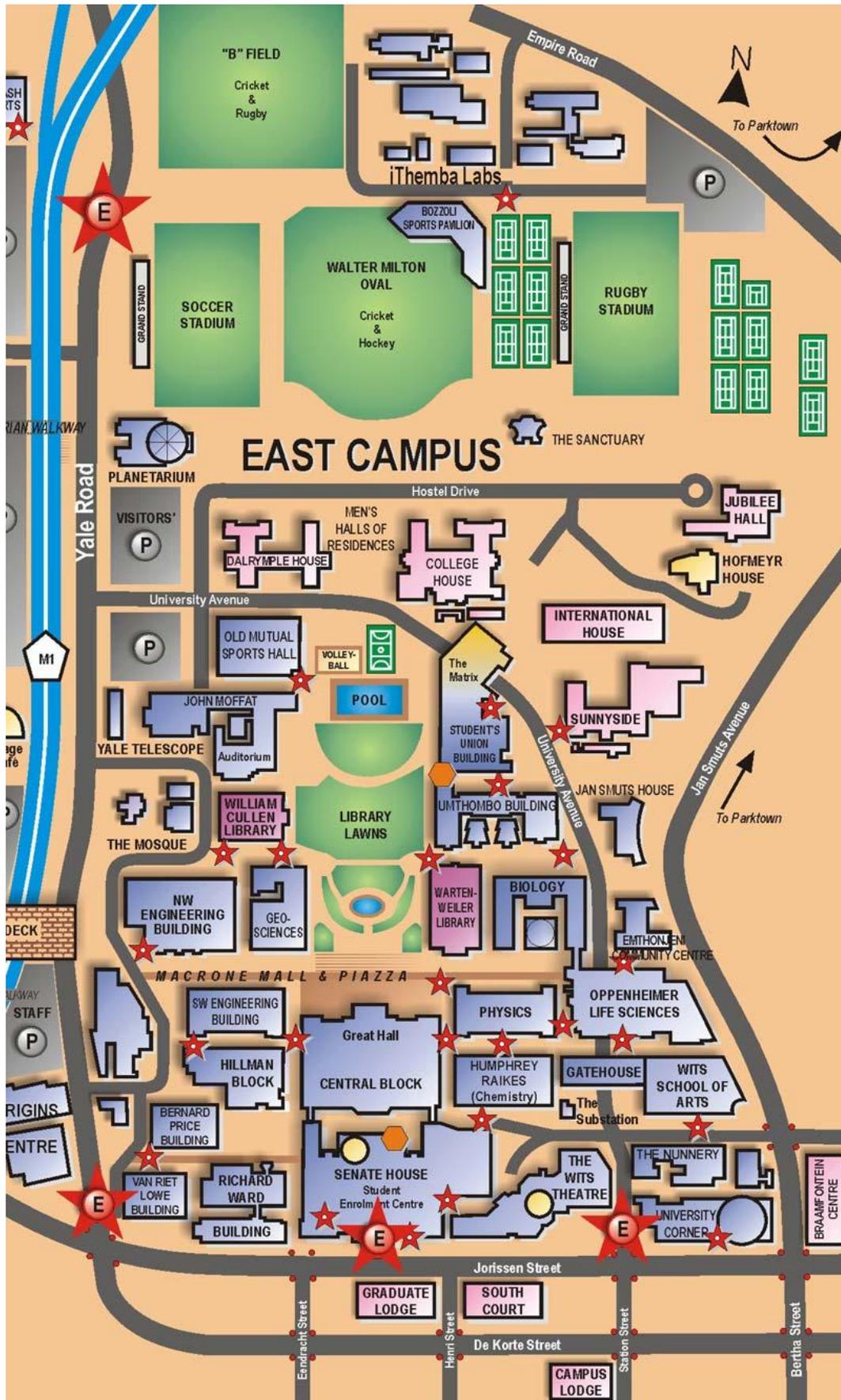
Gautrain	011 759-7217
Rea Vaya Bus Transit System	011 375 5555 (closes ticket station near Civic Theatre, Braamfontein)
Metered Taxi	083 383 3673 (Adventure While Young, attention Lewis)

Queries & Questions:

Please consult the conference team:

- Mpumi Melaphi
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Map of East Campus



List of Speakers

Akua Britwum	Institute for Development Studies, University of Cape Coast, Ghana
Alessandra Mezzadri	SOAS, Russell Square London
Alexei Izyumov	The University of Louisville
Angela D. Akorsu	Institute for Development Studies, University of Cape Coast, Ghana
Anna Bolsheva	GLU Alumni
Anselmo Santos	Director Adjunto do CESIT/IE/UNICAMP
Asanda Benya	University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
Babalwa Magoqwana	Rhodes University and University of Free State
Babu P. Remesh	Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi India
Bridget Kenny	University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
Bruno Dobrusin	Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai- India
Carlos Salas Paez	CESIT IE/Unicamp
Carol Jess	Ruskin College, Oxford - now based in New Zealand
Chandra Bhatta	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Nepal Office
Chris Tilly	Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, UCLA
Christoph Scherrer	Kassel University, Germany
Crispen Chinguno	University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
Daniel Hawkins	National School of Trade Unionism of Colombia-ENS (South America)
David Uzzell	University of Surrey
Debdulal Saha	Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai- India
Devan Pillay	University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
Donna McGuire	University of Kassel
Eddie Cottle	BWI, Cape Town
Edlira Xhafa	University of Milan, Italy
Edward Webster	University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
Elaine Hui Sio Ieng	University of Kassel, Germany
Ely Fair	GLU Alumni
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Eugenia Troncoso Leone	Cesit IE/Unicamp
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Fidelma Murphy	Kingston University
Franco Barchiesi	Dept. of African-American and African Studies, Ohio State University
Frank Hoffer	International Labour Organisation
Hansjörg Herr	Berlin School of Economics and Law
Hari Nugroho	Universitas Indonesia
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Jennifer Jihye Chun	University of British Columbia
José Dari Krein	Unicamp, Brazil
José Ricardo Barbosa Gonçalves	Unicamp, Brazil
Kaustav Banerjee	Jawaharlal Nehru University
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Mwansa Kamukwamba	Mulungushi University, Zambia
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Abstracts of Conference Papers

Thursday, 29th September 2011

Topic : Non-Traditional Labour

Rethinking Street Traders as a Promising Agent of Re-empowering Labour Movement in Contemporary South Africa

Ercüment Çelik,

In recent years many labour scholars have been discussing the need to revitalise the labour movement. At the heart of these debates is a need to find ways to shift from traditional unionism to a new 'social movement unionism' (Webster and Buhlungu, 2004; Voss and Sherman, 2000; Turner, Katz and Hurd, 2001). This is strongly connected with the escalating emphasis on reviving and redefining trade unions' role as 'sword of justice' (Hyman, 1999). Reassertion of the *movement* dimension of trade unionism under varying conditions has also been a key part of these debates (von Holdt, 2002; Fairbrother, 2008). In South Africa, it has been excessively discussed that social movement unionism has undergone an erosion as solidarity has fractured along new and old lines with the transition to democracy and processes of elite-formation in post-apartheid era (von Holdt, 2002). Thus, the challenge of union revitalisation entails more than simply trying to strengthen existing union organisations. There is a need to go beyond traditional union structures to explore imaginative ways of engagement with, among others, the unemployed, the 'new working poor' and the new social movements (Webster and Buhlungu, 2004). Concerning these debates, this paper calls attention to street traders' promising agency in re-empowering labour movement in contemporary South Africa. It aims at explaining how street traders rearticulate trade unions with social movements, reactivate the movement dimension of trade unionism, and therefore, can revitalise social movement unionism in contemporary South Africa.

In this paper, I argue that through their new democratic organisations and initiatives i.e. 'World Class Cities for All' Campaign (WCCA), street traders play a bridging role between trade unions and social movements. In the first part of the paper, I will present some findings of a survey that was applied to 105 street traders in six locations in Durban, South Africa in 2007 that elucidate street traders' perspectives on their livelihood struggles at their workplace and their homes, their class status, and their approach to WCCA. In the second part, I will focus on reorganising street traders under new democratic structures in Durban and their growing alliance with the other marginalised groups. In the following part, I will demonstrate how the WCCA facilitates broader relations between street traders, social movements and trade unions. One of the key issues is that their joint forces demand for the participation of the urban poor in preparations for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Accordingly, I will discuss how they challenge the authorities to create alternatives to current practices of evicting street traders and clearing slums where the urban poor lose both their livelihoods and homes. The issue of evictions of street traders and evictions of shack dwellers will be taken significantly in constructing the link between the workplace and community. Afterwards, I will hold how shack dwellers movement in Durban incorporates street traders with their struggle and stress their approach to working class unity. In the last part, I will attempt to situate street traders' agency in the 'social movement unionism' approach. Moreover, regarding the policy orientation that is encouraged by the Global Labour University, the paper will also underline the opportunities for strengthening the power of Labour Caucus in National Economic, Development and Labour Council through the platform created by the WCCA campaign, which has initiated constructive dialogue between trade unions and social movements.

Maid for Work - Gender and Migration for Domestic Work in India : A Case Study of Domestic Workers from Jharkhand

Neha Wadhawan

Transformations in the state and interstate system, particularly those brought on by globalisation processes, have produced new constraints and opportunities. In the case of women particularly, it has created possibilities of

moving out of the 'fixed' private space called home and into the market, into the public, enabling them to earn livelihoods for themselves and their families. Concurrently, it has also resulted in the intense exploitation of women through being pushed into the informal sector, trafficked, being paid irregular and low wages, and facing systematic racial discrimination and sexual abuse.

In the twenty-first century, the processes of globalisation have also helped shape a new organization of social reproduction in the world. This organization is characterized by reliance, on the part of families and individuals, on paid workers to perform a broad range of domestic tasks in private homes. This new organization is also characterized by the fact that these domestic workers are migrant women from the third world, women who have left their homes because of structural and social constraints and have come to a better developed country or region due to an expanding low-wage service economy and the maturation of social networks. Thus, paid domestic work and migrant women have become intimately linked.

Migrant women are 'themselves means of production' (Aguilar 2002:11). They also participate in the 'physical, cultural and ideological production of human beings' in racialised, classed and gendered ways (Anderson 2000:13). Conventional studies tend to depict migrant women as an issue that concerns the individual household, and, possibly, the local economy. Rarely do they focus on the complicity of the state, including those on the periphery of the world economy, in facilitating the exploitation of women's reproductive labour by its propertied class specifically, and for transnational bourgeois capitalist interests, generally.

This paper attempts to explore the gendered aspects of migration for paid domestic work in India. The estimated number of domestic workers in India is 90 million (ISI 2008) but this is a guess-timate as there has been no systematic study to document such workers throughout the country. These workers usually fall into the category of irregular migrants or short term migrants which has not been succinctly captured in statistical studies yet. Recently, however studies based on available NSS data on some quantitative aspects of women's migration for work have been conducted (Pillai 2006, 2010) and these are beginning to shed light on the magnitude of female migration within the informal economy in India. A Central Task Force set up by the National Social Security Board declared that the number of domestic workers varies from 4.75 million to 6.4 million. The sector is said to have grown by 222% since 2000.

The first section looks at theoretical debates relating to reproductive labour and gendered migration for care work. The second section looks at the changes brought about during the neoliberal restructuring process with a focus on the growing informal sector in India and women's participation within the informal economy. The next section delves into gendered labour migration processes and evidence of the growing demand for domestic workers within India which also serves as a country of origin, of transit and of destination to millions of migrant workers. However, domestic workers are paid much below legal minimum wages in the country. The last section focuses on migration for domestic work from the district of Gumla in the state of Jharkhand with case studies and detailed socio-economic data on migrant domestic workers, mostly working in New Delhi. This section will shed light on how regional circuits link up with larger labour circuits, supplying to global care chains extending from the remote poverty ridden villages of backward areas to the opulent and powerful urban centres in more developed regions.

Environmental Labour Studies: tackling the job-environment, north-south contradictions

Nora Räthzel & David Uzzell,

Environmental degradation and Climate change are rarely a subject of labour studies. Likewise, environmental studies focusing on production, usually limit themselves to analysing Corporate Social Responsibility, or technological changes, without taking the work process and workers' rights into account. Our research project is investigating the relationship between labour and the environment and environmental policies in a north-south perspective. The proposed paper presents our first results from an investigation of the ways in which trade unions in the Global North and South are developing policies towards environmental degradation and climate change.

The paper will focus on what we see as the two main contradictions facing trade union policies globally: 1. The way in which workers of the South and the North are set against each other as competitors for jobs through the relocation processes of Transnational Corporations, 2. The apparent contradiction between protecting jobs and protecting the environment with which trade unions are confronted when environmental measures are not accompanied by social measures. We will discuss the barriers unions face in overcoming these contradictions and analyse the policies they are developing to combine social and environmental sustainability: 'Green Jobs' and 'Just Transition'. We present and discuss the three most shared union positions with regards to change: a focus

on improved technology to safeguard jobs and protect the environment simultaneously; the position that environmental change should be undertaken hand in hand with social change; the attempt to redefine rather than abandon the immediate interests in job security to enable relations of mutual solidarity instead of competition between workers in different sectors. The paper concludes by arguing that if the general interest of workers is defined in terms of combining their interests as workers with their interests as citizens, the existing divide between labour and nature could be overcome and environmental policies could become more prominent among the workforce.

The research method is a qualitative case study, predominantly of the metalworkers unions at international, national, and local levels. The metalworking industry is typically regarded as a significant GHG emitter and the metalworking unions have been reluctant to put environmental issues on their agenda. By way of a comparison, we have chosen the International and European Transport Workers Federation, since they have developed some of the most important environmental policies, but they are also seen as an industry responsible for high levels of GHG emissions. The empirical bases of our research are 35 semi-structured interviews with unionists in international, regional, national and local trade unions. Interviews include senior policy makers in the ITUC, IMF, ETUC, and EMF and other international unions. Unionists in national federations and metalworkers and transport unions have been interviewed in Sweden, the UK, Brazil, South Africa, and Malaysia. We have also conducted participant observation at several Trade Union conferences and at the COP 15. In addition we analyse policy documents of unions internationally and nationally.

‘Living Labour’ and the Politics of (Re)Production: Possibilities in Orange Farm

Prishani Naidoo

As unemployment has risen and fulltime, permanent, waged labour declined in post-apartheid South Africa, various attempts have been (and are being) made to address what some have called “the crisis of social reproduction” being experienced by the working class. While decent work has been held up by the state and some in civil society as the solution, others have reiterated the call for a Basic Income Grant (BIG) and the need to explore alternatives for (re)production outside of waged labour. While the organised left has campaigned under the banner ‘The Right to Work’, groups of unemployed people have sometimes undertaken their collective survival through income generation projects that conceive of work very differently to that structured by a wage. This paper will engage with some of these debates and differences through the experiences of groups of unemployed people in Orange Farm, an informal settlement home to over 1.5 million people, on the periphery of Johannesburg, approximately 45km south-west of the city centre.

Based on in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted between 2006 and 2010, the paper will examine some of the ways in which unemployed people have collectively responded to the difficulties presented by their lack of access to waged labour. The views and experiences of the following groups of Orange Farm residents will form part of the discussion: male residents who settled in Orange Farm with their families in the late 1980s as a result of securing full-time jobs with Premier Milling Company (which had also built proper brick houses with full access to services for them in Orange Farm) and who subsequently lost these jobs in the 1990s and have remained unemployed ever since; former employees of Pickitup; volunteers active in projects allied with the ANC and/or government; members of the Kganya Women’s Consortium (a collective of thirteen women’s projects); members of the Itsoseng Women’s Project; and members of the Orange Farm Water Crisis Committee (OWCC). In particular, the unique relationship between the overtly political work of the OWCC and the social and economic work of Itsoseng will be explored, as well as their collectively conscious attempts to provide for their own (re)productive needs outside of traditional conceptions of the wage and work. In its explorations of the mobilisation of concepts such as ‘self reliance’ and experimentation with non-hierarchical modes of organising (re)production and politics amongst members of Itsoseng and the OWCC, the paper will also reflect on discussions about transformations in labour and class composition in autonomist Marxist writings. In doing this, it will ask whether the decline of waged labour in post-apartheid South Africa has opened up the potential for the self-valorisation of labour (‘living labour’) in collectives and communities of unemployed people for whom not having a regular job or

wage has meant the production of different ways of living that present alternatives to capitalist forms of social relations and (re)production.

Filipino migrant domestic workers in the context of Asian migration and development trends: Case studies on returned Filipino domestic workers.

Verna Viajar

The 21st century has finally acknowledged that we are becoming a world of migrants. More than 250 million people around the globe are in one way or another in different status of being a migrant. Asia ranks second after Europe with the highest number of migrants in the world at 62 million (CMA 2010). The push and pull for migration remain economic in nature with the lack of available decent work from sending countries and the “acute worker shortage” in receiving countries (CMA, 2010; ILO, 2010; Solidar, 2010). Migrant sending countries encourage migration to relieve its unemployment pressure and to benefit from the remittances (Wickramasekera, 2002). Persistence of poverty and relative poverty continue as a major push factor for people to migrate in search for economic security (Battistella, 2003; ILO 2010). At the macro level, the increasing rate of migration is attributed to the “uneven and negative effects of globalization” widening inequality and income disparities around the world (ITUC, 2010; GFMD 2009 Joint Civil Society Declaration). Behind the many reasons for migration, Wickramasekera (2002) identifies four main reasons why workers migrate: (a) search for higher wages; (b) lured by friends, relatives and other social networks; (c) curiosity; and (d) to flee from conflict or persecution.

Asia is a region that employs millions of domestic workers and a huge source of migrant domestic workers within the region, to the Middle East and to the northern countries. An estimated 4 million migrant domestic workers are working within Asia and 1.5 million migrant domestic workers to other destinations come from Asia, majority of who are women (CMA, 2010). Among the major source countries of migrant domestic workers are India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines who troop to the Gulf States, Lebanon and Jordan as well as to rich Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia (CMA, 2010). Studies have shown that migrant domestic workers contribute in the economic productivity of receiving countries freeing women in industrializing countries to participate in the labor market (CMA, 2010). The irony lies in the undervaluing and invisibility of domestic work in labor relations of receiving countries that benefit them. Domestic work exposes a gendered employment system wherein women workers are pigeonholed in specific jobs mostly comprised of women. The nature of domestic work, commonly situated inside the household, renders migrant domestic workers to many forms of human rights violations, abuse and exploitation.

This paper examines the motivations, conditions and experiences of Filipino migrant domestic workers who have worked or returned from other parts of the world in the context of the raging debate on migration and development. This paper is also contextualized based on the development trends in select migrant-sending countries in Asia highlighted by debates involving the migration-development nexus. The study interviews three (3) returned migrant domestic workers from Europe and Israel. The research shall probe into the respondents’ life as migrant workers abroad and their life today in the Philippines after their return.

Politics and neoliberalism: Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union’s struggle to protect workers

Suzanne Dansereau

Since Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980, the ZCTU has been a significant actor, moving from an appendage of the ruling party to a leadership role in voicing growing labour resistance to neoliberal reforms ushered in through structural adjustment and in the establishment, with civil society, of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change which continues to challenge ZANU-PF’s stranglehold on the state. Yet as the MDC coalesced into the most significant opposition party, contesting parliamentary and presidential elections, now forming part of the government of national unity, the ZCTU sought to maintain its independence as a voice for workers, working through the collective bargaining process while fighting for its right of association and expression in a political process shaped by violence and human rights abuses.

The paper will explore the ZCTU's assessment of this strategy in terms of the political space it has been able to carve out for itself in the face of significant attacks by the ruling party, the loss of leaders to the MDC, the disappearance of formal sector employment and organising the informal sector. It must be remembered however that while the dominant economic story in Zimbabwe has been inflation and job loss, these are undertaken in a context in which employers seek to find new ways of cutting costs and benefiting from neoliberal globalisation, a search that has increased since the greater stability achieved during the government of national unity. The paper will analyze ZCTU's struggle within the complex context in which it is engaged – a context shaped by human rights abuses, patrimonial politics and neoliberal globalisation. It will reveal a great deal about the relationship between trade unions and politics in its discussion of the various strategies used by the labour movement to bring a labour voice into national debates yet retain its independence and capacity to protect workers on the job front.

Labour Relations in Uruguay under the *Frente Amplio* Government, 2005-2009: From Neoliberalism to Neocorporativism?

Jana Silverman

The small South American country of Uruguay has been long considered a bastion of progressive labor policy in the region, due in large part to the reformist efforts of President Jose Battle y Ordonez in the early 20th century, which guaranteed the establishment of fundamental rights such as the eight hour day, union freedoms, and social security coverage for workers. This in turn led to the incorporation of the working class as an important political and social actor in the country, capable of influencing the development strategies of the State, until the installation of an authoritarian regime in 1973. During this time, the labor movement and its nascent political ally, the center-left *Frente Amplio* party, was officially banned and forced to operate on the margins of Uruguayan society. However, with the redemocratization of the country in 1985, the political and organizational capacity of the unions was truncated yet again, this time due to the implementation of neoliberal, open-market policies which eliminated the role of the State in promoting union freedoms and collective bargaining in favor of a “voluntary” system of labor relations that ignored the inherent power inequities between workers and employers.

This system prevailed for over a decade until the sweep of the October 2004 presidential and congressional elections by the *Frente Amplio* (FA), labor's historical political partner with whom they share ideological, organizational, and personal ties. Beginning in 2005, the FA government led by President Tabare Vasquez instituted a wide-ranging set of changes to the Uruguayan labor relations framework, through the convening of mandatory sector-wide collective bargaining negotiations known as the *Consejos de Salarios*, the granting of further guarantees for union leaders and activists through the *Ley de Fueros Sindicales*, and the expansion of collective bargaining processes to previously excluded categories of workers, such as teachers, domestic workers, and rural laborers. This paper will attempt to analyze these transformations, investigating how this new activist role of the State in the promotion of union freedoms and collective bargaining has impacted workers, employers and unions, as well as examining the concrete strategies of this latter actor, to see if the implantation of this neocorporativist approach to labor relations has compromised in any way the political and organizational independence of the labor movement. The methodology for this paper will include both quantitative and qualitative research, through the analysis of data related to voting trends, unionization and unemployment rates as well as other labor market and political statistics. To complement this, a review of the literature and in-depth on-site interviews with relevant governmental, political party, and union movement actors will also be conducted.

Thursday, 29th September 2011

Topic : Labour & Policy

Labor vs. Capital Incomes in Transition Economies: What Would Karl Marx Said?

Alexei Izyumov

The paper analyzes linkages between models of capitalism that emerged in the newly market economies of Eastern Europe and ex-USSR and the outcome of transition for labor in terms of national income

distribution. It is based on estimates of the Marxian rate of exploitation, real wage, general rate of profit and other indicators of income performance during the period of 1992-2008. Endogenous determinants of national income distribution are discussed in the Marxian analytical framework and compared across countries. We find that high level of profit rates in transition economies is primarily explained by higher rate of surplus value (rate of exploitation), which was estimated to be 1.5-2 above comparable estimates for “mature market economies” of Western Europe and similar to those in emerging market economies such as Brazil and India. Among the transition economies, distribution of national income was found to be more favorable for labor in East European countries and more favorable for capital in Russia and other countries of the former USSR. Based on the estimates of the rate of exploitation and other indicators we argue that even before the accession to the European Union workers in East European countries through trade-union activity and political participation were able to influence the formation of a model of capitalism, where its economic interests were reasonably well protected. At the same time, workers in the countries of the former USSR did not take an active role in the formation of the new capitalist system and suffered the consequences in the form of suppressed wages, unfavorable fiscal re-distribution, and sharper inequality. Policy implications for the working class of Transition Economies are considered from the Marxian perspective.

Against Job Creation. Precarious Work as a Challenge to Employment-Centered Normativity in Postcolonial Africa

Franco Barchiesi

The paper updates and expands an argument I touched in my recent book, *Precarious Liberation. Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa*. While it refers to my ethnographic research among South African workers in private and public sectors, which informed the book, it mainly relies on a theoretical discussion based on policy debates and secondary literature on precarious employment in relation to citizenship and development in postcolonial Africa. Its aim is to propose an innovative key to understanding labor’s role in social antagonism and policymaking, which will question conventional sociological understandings of precariousness as a reality of domination and disempowerment. It will rather analyze precariousness as a condition of political possibility in which workers and communities signify emancipation by problematizing the productivist imperatives of “job creation” policies within a more general critique of work-centered state normativity.

The social positions of labor in postcolonial Africa have often been determined by state ideologies that appropriated and adapted universalist themes inherited from the experience of Western colonial domination. First, the idea of citizenship recast employment as a foundation of progress, inclusion, and actualization of abstract constitutional rights, usually with the associated intimation for workers’ movements to forgo antagonisms of class and gender. Second, the discourse of development has praised labor movements as actors in nation-building projects, which stigmatized claims for social change and resource redistribution as inimical to general prosperity and to the uplift of the majority of unemployed or informally employed workers. The persistence in independent Africa of these two important tropes of Western-derived modernity has aimed, in the imagination of postcolonial developmentalist states, to make relations between state and society predictable and governable.

But grassroots workers’ strategies also appropriated governmental ideas of citizenship and development to boost radical claims and shifts in social power relations. The autonomy of workers’ discursive formations is indeed decisive in explaining the meanings and impacts of labor movements in postcolonial Africa. Workers’ strategies and discourse have, however, also underscored labor’s social and political diversity as waged employment – once the main target of the state’s normative discourse of citizenship and development – has never overcome its numerically limited status and has indeed been dramatically eroded during the past three decades of economic liberalization, which have expanded various types of precarious, undocumented, and self-employed occupations. In Africa, economic liberalization as well as debates on the “developmental state” have indeed celebrated informal economic activities as antidotes to poverty, in ways that often disentangle the long-standing rallying cry of “job creation” from considerations related to the quality, fairness, and decency of the jobs being created.

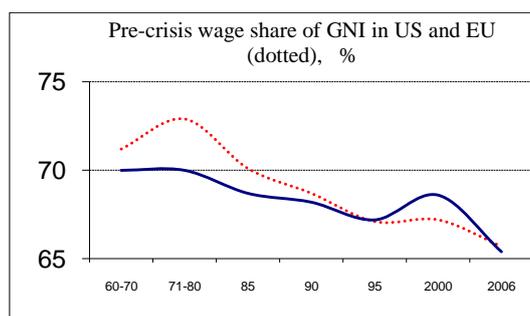
Yet, the long and complex history of how African workers have negotiated and questioned the state’s normativity of employment, citizenship, and development reveals an alternative trajectory, where workers

embrace precariousness and signify casual jobs as ways to escape capitalist workplace discipline, articulate wage labor with multiple modes of livelihood, and oppose to market-centered rationality alternative claims and common socioeconomic demands. The paper will assess the contemporary relevance of this historically powerful critique of official employment-centered normativity and how it problematizes the centrality of “job creation” in the imagination of African developmental states and progressive forces.

The Political Economy of Labor-Capital Income Imbalances. European Solutions

Ognian N. Hishow

Starting point: The EU economic and social model has for long been put under pressure, especially since globalization accelerated. Standard techniques to gauge the trend like labor’s share of output support the hypothesis globalization and income redistribution are negatively correlated. Perversely, in some cases the opposite trend emerged: in UK labor’s share was growing. Here the exorbitant income gains in the financial industry caused the anomaly.



Source: Eurostat

Two strands of research literature have been searching to explain why owners of labor did lose in favor of owners of capital in Europe. **First**, in the open EU economy the shift of relative factor supply causes relative factor prices to shift too. This trend is expected to last in the decades to come because of the ongoing integration of BRICS nations and many others into the global economy.

Secondly, technological progress benefits skilled labor. New technologies require skill improvements and better education. Hence the relative income position of the high skilled was improving.

Methodological approach:

1) A standard tool box centered around the function $\alpha = (\ln y - \ln A)/\ln k$. Puzzling: If factors were paid to their productivity: falling α , increasing $(1 - \alpha)$.

Proof: $(1 - \alpha) = w(N/Y) = w/(Y/N)$. Hypothesis: Oversupply of labor kept w below equilibrium or what is the same real wage growth has lagged productivity growth.

2) Trade theory findings: In general, EU15 produces costlier across the board. Will Europe’s economy collapse? Ricardian/Heckscher-Ohlin trade theory based conclusion: No, because new specialization patterns continue to emerge.

Recommendations to preserve the economic and social model:

I. Trade related: Allow for shifts in specialization (economic aspect).

Help the affected to find a new job in new industries (social aspect).

II. Technology related: Improve human capital to avoid competition with low skilled labor abroad. Research results make clear that wage differentials among individuals are largely the result of different patterns of investment in human capital. Education or training allows for escaping from low pay to better paid jobs. Education decreases the risk of falling into low-wage employment.

Achieving a Decent Work Agenda in South Africa: Finding synergies between public employment schemes and social security interventions within a New Growth Strategy

Rudi Dicks, Stephanie Brockerhoff and George Lwanda

South Africa faces a threefold crisis of employment, poverty and inequality. Unemployment remains high at 25.2% (Statssa, QLFS 2nd Q, 2011) if the narrow definition is used and 36.3% (Statssa, QLFS 2nd Q, 2011) if a broader definition is applied. Furthermore, inequality is very high and poverty for the poorest section of society has been eased slightly through the provision of cash transfers, but the monetary value of grants and the fact that entire households benefit from these transfers means that poverty has been alleviated, but is far from being eradicated.

South Africa thus faces the challenges of having to rapidly create jobs, as jobs alone will finally help people break out of the poverty trap. The question that this paper seeks to address is what support mechanisms exist for people who are currently unemployed and whether these initiatives can support the creation of decent jobs through the New Growth Path. However, given the structural unemployment we observe in South Africa today it is impossible to wait for the creation of a sufficient number of jobs.

Whilst the creation of decent and sustainable employment remains the key, long term objective, cash transfers and public employment programmes can – in the meantime - provide substantial poverty relief to households who struggle to meet basic needs. For many South African households stuck in a poverty trap, social security support and access to a public employment scheme are essential for reducing poverty, increasing household income, enabling them to pursue job searches and livelihood strategies.

It is for this reason that this paper seeks to investigate synergy effects between public employment schemes and, social security and how we can improve the complementarity of Social Grants a Public Employment programmes in reducing poverty, meeting household needs and improve opportunities for full time decent employment

Thursday, 29th September 2011

Topic : Politics of Labour

Trade Union perceptions amongst local government call-centre workers: challenges and opportunities for South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU)

Babalwa Magoqwana

This paper provides an account of the concerns with the ongoing debate about the employment and human consequences of the call-centre labour process amongst local government call-centres. This research is based on the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality and Joburg Connect (City of Johannesburg Metro) front-line. South African Municipal Workers Unions (SAMWU) forms the majority union in both Metros. Collective action is constrained by individualisation of employment contracts and the nature of work conducted in this industry (Benner, et al, 2007). This resulted in the unique workplace challenges of the call-centre not being attended to by the union e.g. working hours, late night transport home, workplace conditions etc. This paper looks at the extent to which a unionised workforce perceives the union as an effective channel for dealing with issues central to the concerns of call centre agents.

Between political unionism and social movement unionism: Cosatu, the ANC-Alliance and the battered wife syndrome

Devan Pillay

At its inception in 1985 Cosatu exemplified social movement unionism, where democratically organized workers engage in both ‘production politics’ and the ‘politics of state power’. Unlike a narrower form of syndicalism, this involved explicit alliances with movements and organizations outside the workplace, but under strict conditions of union independence based on shopfloor accountability. Since 1990, when the ANC and SACP formally drew Cosatu into a triple alliance in pursuit of its ‘national democratic revolution’,

Cosatu gradually drifted towards a narrower form of political unionism. While retaining its independence, and continuing to engage in limited policy contestation on issues outside the workplace, the federation dared not push the envelope too far, and forge links with movements outside the triple alliance.

Rising unemployment, informalisation of work and social inequality, and persistent, widespread poverty, periodically increased tensions between Cosatu and the SACP on the one hand, and the ANC-in-government on the other hand. However, the centre always held, and the Alliance always presented a united front come election time. Explicitly rejecting any suggestion of forming a Left Opposition outside the Alliance, Cosatu and the SACP instead resolved to flood the ANC with working class members, in order to change the leadership and policy direction of the ANC and government. This culminated in the election of Jacob Zuma as ANC president at Polokwane in December 2007, and as the country's president in April 2009. Key Cosatu and SACP leaders occupied the reigns of ANC leadership at national and provincial level, and as government ministers. The ANC deepened its resolve to construct a 'democratic developmental state', implying a move away from an orthodox 'neo-liberal' growth path, and the massive creation of, amongst other things, 'decent' jobs in the pursuit of greater social equity.

However, soon after the April 2009 elections, contestation against the state increased dramatically, as it became clear that government, beholden to vested interest within the minerals-energy-finance complex, was not prepared to shift from its orthodox macro-economic stance, and the ANC was not prepared to give up its position as the political centre of the Alliance. The massive public sector strikes of 2010, increasingly strident criticism of the predatory nature of the ANC elite, and Cosatu's explicit flirtation with organizations of civil society to the left of the ANC, suggested a return to a more robust social movement unionism. It provoked an unprecedented backlash from its alliance partners – with the SACP for the first time openly criticizing Cosatu. Was Cosatu preparing the way for a break with the Alliance, or just flexing its muscles to increase its bargaining power from within?

A raft of draft labour legislation to, amongst other things, outlaw labour broking prompted pro-business commentators to suggest that "the draft legislation vindicates the view that staying in the alliance was the better strategy to push the political centre of gravity of the ANC further to the left" (*Business Day* 31/1/11). Indeed, after initial objections to certain key provisions, Cosatu in 2011 seems to be warming to the government's New Growth Path, as the Alliance closes ranks for the May municipal elections.

Is this the same dance as always – fierce quarrels between the battered wife and abusive husband, only to be followed by reconciliation before the next flare-up? Can the battered wife ever leave the husband she still loves (despite the neglect and abuse) as long as he periodically gives her flowers and a few trinkets?

In attempting to answer this question, this paper will explore the relationship between Cosatu and its alliance partners since the 2009 elections. It will draw on the history of Cosatu, policy documents, newspaper articles and interviews with key respondents, and locate the discussion within a broader conceptualization of working class politics, and social movement, political and business unionism.

Can a labor-friendly government be friendly to labor? A hegemonic analysis of Brazilian, German and South African experiences

Christoph Scherrer & Luciana Hachmann

A labor movement cannot do without getting involved in politics, because so many aspects of its own conditions of action as well as its members' lives are shaped by the prevailing laws and balance of forces in the political arena. In many countries the labor movement, therefore, operated with two "arms", one a trade union, the other a political party. However, the relationship between the two arms was seldom without tension. In particular, once the political arm got into government, trade unions were frequently disappointed about the government's agenda, sometime they became even the target of a supposedly labor friendly government.

The paper will address the reasons for tensions between trade unions and labor-friendly parties in government. It will show that neither models in line with the assumption that voters determine government actions (the Downs' tradition) nor models working with the assumption that parties maximize the preferences of their members seem to hold (Roemer). These models would predict policies much more in line with voters' or party members' preferences. We will therefore turn to theories of hegemony, which we believe help explain the broader context of the relationship between unions and government parties. We start out with an analysis of structural *constraints* (not structural *determinations*) for a left-of-center party, which

result from the actions of four groups: the ministerial bureaucracy, business interests, the press, and international forces (governments and investors). We investigate the logic of coalition governments, the role of non-core voters group and why leftist activists, although important for coming to power in the first place, are frequently considered to be a threat to the party's hold to power. Lastly we theorize why trade unions find it difficult to respond to unfriendly acts by a labor-friendly party in government.

Our main hypothesis is that when trade unions are on the defensive because of a lack of mobilization capabilities and absence of an intellectually attractive agenda, a left-of-center government will feel under pressure to veer to the middle. We will explore the plausibility of this thesis at the hand of three cases which are similar only in respect to the fact that a labor friendly party came to power in a country with a relatively strong labor movement: Brazil 2003-2010, Germany 1998-2005 and South Africa 1994-2010.

Legitimizing Traditional Rights through Social Movement Unionism

Pravin Sinha

It was through the Forest Act 1926 that the traditional rights of forest dwellers were withdrawn by transferring ownership right to the State. The residents in forest, most of whom were tribal were turned into trespassers with no rights to collect forest products on which their livelihood depended. Although India secured independence in 1947, the status of forest dwellers as also workers remained unchanged. The change in forest ownership from the British Colonial Government to that of independent India have had little effect of their status since the Forest Law remained unchanged. Ever since the affairs of forest is managed by the Forest Department through contractors. The concerns of workers are addressed through contractors who work on the principle of exploitation. Consequently, the interest of contractor became overriding in the management of the Forest while that of Government [conservation and growth of forest as country's natural resources – as also commons] and survival and welfare of forest people and workers became secondary. In the absence of an effective trade union of forest workers their unabated exploitations have been going on under the very nose of the Government which is visualized as their protector.

The existing policies for the protection and management of commons including forest have raised concerns as the same had cause marginalization of people's initiatives. People living in and on forest have been facing increasing exploitation at the hands of contractors and forest officials and alienation from the environment of their permanent residence. The approach of those living in forest are defined as primitive while those of migrant contractors have led to nothing but depletion of forest that in turn have affected the livelihood of forest people. The long standing debates on who manages commons have remained inconclusive. Recently the Nobel Laureate Prof. Elinor Ostrom while presenting main findings of her study in India concluded that engagement of locals have brought in better results.

An initiative to bring the concerns of forest people that began in early 1990 has brought fruit in the form of legitimizing forest dwellers right through enactment of The Forest Rights Act in 2007. The FES engagement with this initiative had been right from its inception and still continues in the form of generating awareness about the Act as also in enhancing capacities of MBO's functionaries to play active part in Joint Forest Management Council.

The paper is narrative in character but highlights collusion of officials, contractors and agents in depriving the basic rights to forest people and workers. It subsequently traces how own initiatives of forest people led by women and supported by community resulted in positive action from the State toward legitimizing their status in the forest. It thus draws lessons from the same.

Radical reform against all odd : the CWIU and trade union strategy, 1987 – 1999

Mbuyiseni Ndlozi

By the end of the 1980s, the independent trade union movement in South Africa consolidated what Adler and Webster call 'radical reform' as a trade union strategy: building socialism using "legal means of struggle" and policy engagement through structures like NEDLAC. Labour set out to influence both the democratic transition and the shape of post apartheid South Africa. This paper examines the limits,

successes and failures of this strategy through a case study of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU, 1987-1999). Drawing on original research and a wide literature on debates over trade unions strategy, it argues that the union did not benefit from this strategy. It was unable to affect the direction of the chemical industry, or prevent retrenchments, outsourcing, privatisation and low salaries. Radical reform requires, in addition, a technocratic style of politics, based on expert negotiations and high level research leaving rank and file members as passive spectators – Indeed factors the union itself admits, in short, it has not made major gains; instead, it has facilitated its own decline. Moreover, the paper concludes with what can be considered as an attempt to answer the puzzle of why the trade union movement, despite its admitted failures, stuck with radical reform as its strategy.

Statement of Methodology

This paper is based on interviews conducted with key informants who were in the union in the years under study. In addition, and more critical, it has drawn on archives which included minutes, annual reports, congress resolutions, pamphlets, and union news paper articles.

From “strategic unionism” to anarcho-syndicalism: rethinking union strategy in the Great Recession

Lucien van der Walt

A growing recent literature has drawn attention to the role of mass anarcho-syndicalist and revolutionary syndicalist unions in class and national liberation struggles from the 1870s to the 1950s. The rediscovery of this tradition – long obscured by the rise of bureaucratic unions and Marxism-Leninism post-World War Two – draws attention to an alternative union approach to industrial policy, working class integration and capital restructuring. Comparing and contrasting this approach with contemporary “strategic unionism” – characterized by union involvement in corporatism, policy support for Keynesianism and industrial protectionism- this paper asks whether the syndicalist approach offers alternative methods of engaging with global neo-liberal capitalism, a project of “globalization from below” through participatory democratic struggles and structures.

Labour and the politics of alliance: The Case of Labour and Civil Society Coalition (LASCO) in Nigeria.

Muttaqa Yusha’u Abdulra’uf

Nigeria’s return to civil rule in 1999 opened the democratic space in the country; new form of labour regime is entrenched. With the widening of the political space, labour politics was engendered by new form of alliances that sort to engage the state.

The formation of labour civil society coalition in Nigeria is watershed in forging alliances of popular forces in addressing socio-economic and political inequalities in Nigeria. For instance the two trade union centers in Nigeria i.e. Nigeria Labour congress, (NLC) and Trade Union Congress, (TUC) aligned several occasions with the civil society to advocate for pro-poor macro-economic policies.

The neo-liberal posture of the Nigeria’s civilian regime has been duly challenged by these forces. Three issues were at the fore of the campaign, of these popular forces, namely; wage review (asking for an increased minimum wage), electoral reform, and asking the government not to deregulate the oil sector.

This paper seeks to address the role of labour civil society coalition in engaging the state, by dressing the following questions: How did the popular forces impacted on the government decisions? To what extent has the popular forces achieved their campaign issues? What alternative policy realms do the popular forces initiate? What were the major challenges confronted in the struggle? How the working classes in Nigeria do viewed these alliances and its impact on their livelihood?

The research is going to use both primary and secondary data, at the primary level a survey will be conducted using interviews and questionnaire instruments as well as focus group discussions. At the secondary source a content analysis of policy document, news papers, periodicals and gazettes will be made.

Building Tomorrow Today”: rethinking the “workerist” tendency in the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in South Africa, 1979 – 1985

Sian Byrne

The “workerist” tendency is often said to have dominated the independent unions’ - more specifically FOSATU’s – leadership between 1979 and 1985. The label was used in intense polemics in the 1980s over the appropriate role and functions of trade unions in the context of the national liberation struggle in South Africa. While the debate is widely recognised as pivotal, its polemical character –and the ostensible defeat of the so-called “workerists” – has meant that “workerism” remains poorly understood; its basic features are presented in contradictory terms in the literature, and its basic thrust is presented in different ways. There is, moreover, a marked disjuncture between what those identified as “workerists” actually wrote, and argued, and their portrayal in the literature. FOSATU, for instance, is often presented as “apolitical,” when it waged major battles against the apartheid workplace order, organised elections boycotts to the Tricameral Parliament, and played, through quasi-*soviet* style shopstewards councils, an important role in community uprisings. This paper will therefore revisit the “workerist” tendency within FOSATU, with the objective of unpacking the politics of “workerism”, in terms of influence, ideas and analysis and their translation into praxis, examining its synergies and differences with revolutionary syndicalism, the New Left and popular politics.

Thursday, 29th September 2011

Topic : Transnational Labour Issues

A proposal for a common minimum wage in the Americas, with emphasis in the Mercosur area

Anselmo Santos & Eugenia Troncoso Leone

Minimum wage policies have help to reduce labor exploitation, poverty levels and inequalities. After the Second World War, those policies had a major impact in many developing countries. Even in a context of economic, employment and productivity growth, and great union bargaining power they are basic to protect the weakest groups of workers. In the recent past, several South American countries were able to implement systematic minimum wage policies, and so make significant strides towards less poverty and income inequality, in stark contrast with the neoliberal policy recommendations. An international policy of common minimum wage levels might be able to unify national unions in the international arena, and so help to build international links that could help to strengthen unions at the local level, and to pursue common goals aimed to the construction of an international labor union common project.

This paper has as the objective to discuss difficulties, mechanisms and strategies for the definition of a common minimum wage value in an international setting. The work will focus on the minimum wage inequality in the major economies of the Americas, with emphasis on the Mercosur economies (Argentina, Brasil, Paraguay and Uruguay), examining differences in their minimum wage levels -using purchasing power parity (PPP USD) to make the comparisons, the proportion of minimum wage to average labor income and income per capita. The average share of minimum wage (as a proportion of the average labor income and income per capita) in the Americas, will be used to estimate a minimum wage level that could be used to build a common proposal around which an unified demand of the union movement of different countries could be developed and pushed through national instances. As a long term objective, this minimum wage should seek to have the same values in all the countries considered (in terms of dollars, local currencies and purchasing power parity). This initial proposal aims to identify a value that can serve as a benchmark for minimum wages levels that are able to homogenize the minimum wage as a proportion of average income per capita. It also could help to set a continental income floor (measured in dollars and in purchasing power parity) that is compatible with the basic family needs of the poorest strata of workers in each country. Comparing this value with current minimum wage and national income per capita will enable advances towards dealing with those issues that need to be solved gradually in order to make feasible a

policy of gradual homogenization of a continental minimum wage; taking into account differences in productivity, technological levels, and functional distribution among wage earners, as well as problems associated with the relation between the minimum wage levels and the ability to compete in foreign markets.

Regulating Labor Relations in Global Production Networks. International Framework Agreements as a New Form of Union Power?

Michael Fichter & Collaborators

In 1980, years before globalization became a household word, John Logue, a Swedish social scientist, published a short treatise entitled "Toward a Theory of Trade Union Internationalism". Logue's main argument was that trade unions are nationally embedded organizations for which "international action is an uncertain means of achieving members' interest." Thus: *"the greater the degree of trade union control over its national environment, the less likely it is to undertake international activity to achieve its members' goals. The stronger the national trade union movement, the less likely it is to be internationalistic."* (Logue 1980: 10-11)

Since 1980 we have witnessed a massive expansion of global economic activity through the "liberalization of trade" (deregulation) and the growth of investment and production driven by Transnational Corporations (TNCs). Especially in developing countries, FDI in the form of outsourcing, offshoring, flexibilization and casualization of work has been one of the marks of economic globalization. Moreover, trade unions have to contend with government and legislative support for foreign TNCs and their cost-cutting strategies. In the main, local and national trade union movements have continued to orient their struggles within their national domain. But they have also begun to look for cross-border approaches to combating unfettered international competition fed by a race to the bottom over labor costs. Some of their efforts, such as the cooperation of unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in North and South America to win recognition rights (Armbruster-Sandoval 2003), or at European ports to prevent deregulation (Turnbull 2006), or in transnational activities to reassert control over labor markets and competition (Anner et al. 2006) have been well documented. But beyond such single instances, unions are also in the process of developing a potentially long-term strategy as a structural answer to the dilemma they face, namely, how to bring the power of unions as locally or nationally organized entities to bear on the transnational regulation gap of labor relations. One important tool they have devised for this task is the International Framework Agreement (IFA).

IFAs represent a contract relationship between TNCs and Global Union Federations (GUFs) which afford mutual recognition of the parties to the agreement, set binding standards regarding the ILO Core Labor Standards and other ILO Conventions, provide mechanisms of monitoring and conflict resolution, and define a realm of validity.

Union input and active monitoring of implementation is crucial for its effectiveness. In the pursuit of new and better IFAs, the GUFs and their affiliated members have begun to develop a wider range of corporate-oriented strategies complementing IFAs including campaigning and networking. Where GUFs have begun to concentrate more resources on corporate-oriented policy, union IFA strategy has become less "top down" and more broadly-based. With this development we would argue that the GUFs are both focusing their policy mandate and moving beyond the formal organizational boundaries of the individual TNCs to embrace global production networks. The development of transnational linkages and networks is also an important dimension to the development of new forms of power and leverage.

An IFA can "open doors for local unions to organize; ... to integrate the international dimension into everyday trade union activities; ... [and allow the GUF] to intervene and defend union organizing efforts where local managers are violating [it]" (Wills 2002, p. 685). But it must clearly secure rights beyond normal practice in line with the spirit and norms of the agreement. In most instances, this will also mean that the agreement must prove capable of being implemented as a stand-alone regulation in an otherwise non-supportive environment. And for its potential to be realized in regard to union involvement, a strengthening of union exchange and cross-border cooperation is a key goal for the future.

The paper will critically analyze the use of IFAs as a new form of power or leverage for creating space for union organizing and for injecting unionism as the collective voice of employees into the corporate "webs of

power" (Amoore 2002). It will be based on theoretical insights into the IFA process and on empirical case studies conducted in Brazil, India, South Africa and Turkey.

A Global Labour Charter Movement? A Suitable Issue for Discussion

Peter Waterman

The idea of a GLC is to develop a charter, declaration or manifesto on labour, relevant to *all* working people, under the conditions of a 21st century, globalised, networked, informatised, financial and services capitalism (a GNC).

The notion of such a charter has been provoked by other international labour declarations, *Labour's Platform for the Americas* (2006) and the labour chapter of the *Bamako Appeal* (2006). A limitation of these otherwise very different documents is that each was produced and issued for acceptance or endorsement, by a leadership or (would-be) elite, without discussion by workers, shopfloor or community activists themselves. The GLC notion is, however, also inspired by a feminist one (Women's Global Charter for Humanity 2004), produced after wide discussion by a new mobilising social movement.

In so far as this project is addressed to *emancipation from work* (i.e. labour for capital and state, empire and patriarchy), it implies articulating (both joining and expressing) labour struggles with those of other alienated social categories, people and peoples – particularly that majority of workers, women. The existence of a growing global justice and solidarity movement (GJ&SM), best known through the World Social Forum (WSF) process, makes such articulation increasingly possible.

The broad inspiration and motivation for such a dialogue could be such notions as 'the emancipation of labour' (Plekhanov 1883), 'the liberation of life from work', (Gorz 1999), recognition of the generalisation of proletarianisation, the radically new conditions of labour, types of labourer, and the understanding that these can 'refuse the rule of capital' (Hardt and Negri 2004). Its title could be the 'Global Labour Charter Movement' (GLCM21). 'Charter' reminds us of one of the earliest radical-democratic labour-popular movements of industrial capitalism, the British Chartists. 'Movement' suggests that the formulation of such a declaration requires self-mobilisation and implies a process.

Such a process needs to reveal its origins and debts. These are to: the changing nature of labour under a globalised, networked, financial and services capitalism; to the new kinds of workers and worklessness created by such, to the new forms of labour self-articulation (within and beyond unions), to the shopfloor, urban and rural labour networks (local, national, international), to the labour NGOs (labour service organisations), and to the growing wave of labour education, communication and research responding to this.

The novel principle of such a charter should be its *iterative* nature - that it be conceived not as a correct and final declaration, which workers, peoples and other people simply *endorse* (though endorsement could be allowed for), as for its processal, dialogical and developing nature.

This process should be a virtuous spiral, which can be begun, paused and joined (or left) at any point, but anyway involving the following elements: information/communication, education, dialogue, (re-) formulation, action, evaluation, information...

It is the existence of cyberspace (the internet, the web, computerized multimedia) that makes such a Global Labour Charter for the first time conceivable. We have here not simply a new communications technology but the possibility for developing post-capitalist, post-statist relations. Our process must be computer-based because of the web's built-in characteristics of feedback or dialogue, its worldwide reach, its low cost. An increasing number of workers and activists are in computerized work, are familiar with information and communication technology and have web skills. Given, however, uneven worker computer access, such a process must also be intensely local, imply and empower outreach, using communication methods appropriate to particular kinds of labour and each specific locale.

Networking can and must ensure that any initiators or coordinators do not become permanent leaders or controllers. There is a growing international body of fulltime organisers and volunteer activists, both within and beyond the traditional inter/national unions, experienced in the GJ&SM, who could provide the initial nodes in such a network. Networking also, however, allows for there to be various such charters, in dialogue with each other. Such dialogue should be considered a necessary part of the process and avoid the

authority/iconisation associated with traditional manifestos.

If this proposal assumes the *crisis* of the traditional trade unions, it should be clear that it simultaneously represents an *opportunity* for them. This is for a reinvention of the form of labour self-articulation, as has occurred more than once in the history of capitalism (from guilds to craft unions, from craft to inter/national industrial unions). By abandoning an increasingly notional power, centrality or privilege, unions could simultaneously reinvent themselves and become a necessary and significant part of a movement for social emancipation worldwide. The form or forms of such a reinvention will emerge precisely out of a continuing dialogue, the dialectic between organizational and networking activities.

Starting with the first edition of any GLC, there could be a list of globally-agreed demands and campaigns, with these having emancipatory (demonstrably socially-transformatory, empowering) implications for those involved. Such demands must increase the autonomy of those benefited. They must increase their solidarity with other popular and radically-democratic sectors/movements (rather than increasing their dependence on capital, state, patriarchy, empire).

Any such campaigns must, however, be seen as collective experiments, to be collectively evaluated. They should therefore be dependent on collective self-activity, implying global solidarity, as with the 200-year-old, but never completed, campaign for the eight-hour day. There is a wide range of imaginable issues.

This proposal is clearly marked by its place and language of origin. It is, however, issued under the principle of CopyLeft. It can therefore be adapted, replaced, challenged, rejected and, obviously, ignored. The author would, however, appreciate acknowledgement and copies of any use or response.

The politics of global merger: Wal-mart and the South African retail industry

Bridget Kenny & Stephen Greenberg

This paper considers the (impending, and sure to be confirmed) merger of Wal-mart with the South African listed company Massmart. Wal-mart is the single largest employer of retail workers in the world. Its move into the South African retailing context will have wide scale effects on the industry and on workers' conditions and the union's power in the sector. Through interviews and participant observation, this paper examines the role of state institutions, the South African Commercial and Catering Workers Union, global union solidarity and local activists in conditioning the terms of capital mobility and accumulation. It seeks to problematise the prescriptive literature on 'new labour internationalism' by examining ethnographically how relations between unionists and workers at multiple scales and in practice play out. In the process, it explores the different terms on which labour politics get formulated and the conflicts and contradictions generated between labour rights and 'development'.

From bi-national organisation's trade unions alliance to the establishment of joint industrial relations collective bargaining mechanism: the case of Tanzania Zambia Railway Authority.

Mwansa Kamukwa qmba

This paper is about the development of industrial relations in a bi-national organization; Tanzania Zambia Railway Authority, jointly owned and managed by the Governments of Tanzania and Zambia with different historical, political, economic and social backgrounds.

The importance of the study comes from recent economic and political developments relating to countries forming regional political and economic groupings, such as the European Union, African Union and ASEAN. It is envisaged that these developments will lead to bi-national organizations as common forms of business organizations (e.g. Euro Tunnel between the United Kingdom and France and Tanzania Zambia Railway between Tanzania and Zambia.), hence the need to develop industrial relations systems which will cater for such organizations.

The study was carried out within the phenomenological paradigm, focusing on the actors in industrial relations.

The study reveals that industrial relations in a bi-national organization are highly influenced by national political and economic pressures and are therefore responsive to national industrial relations systems. This conclusion confirms the generally accepted belief that it is not possible to establish a collective bargaining

system in a multi/trans-national organization due to countries' political, economic and social differences (Northrup and Rowan 1979, TAZARA Salary Disparity Committee 1991). However, the same study challenges this conclusion by revealing that Tanzania Railway Association of Workers' Union (TRAWU) of Tanzania and the Workers Union of TAZARA Zambia (WUTAZ) of Zambia have established a joint industrial relations negotiating mechanism where the two trade unions jointly negotiate with management. The collective agreement so concluded is uniformly implemented within the organisation.

The study introduces a bi-national approach to industrial relations, which is concerned with understanding the integration of two national industrial relations systems to establish a bi-national industrial relations model. The study also reveals that with the involvement of all actors in the industrial relations process it is possible to develop a framework through which bi-national industrial relations systems can be developed

The paper proposes that the model be adopted by regional groupings around the world as it does not only localise industrial relations systems but also enhances trade unions alliance and promotes trust and good faith between trade unions and management.

Gender, power and the woman question in trade unions

Sue Ledwith & Collaborators

Introduction

This is a paper about woman and power in labour movements; about both their power deficit and prospect. It briefly discusses gender relations in labour markets in the face of globalisation, moving to examine how these are replicated in relation to trade unions through the dynamics of structure and culture. In the early part of the paper we draw on models of power from Lukes and Bradley, and calls for an inclusive politics of difference from thinkers such as Fraser and Young. We report on research evidence from 11 countries on gendered trade union structures, on measures to move towards more gender equality within unions, and finally explore a range of strategies for women in unions – including those of GLU alumni.

Context - Globalisation and gendered work

Changed patterns of gender relations have been at the centre of the restructuring of work in response to globalisation; women have moved into labour markets faster than men in most parts of the world and now make up the largest share of informal and precarious work. Old power relations of class have been transformed and replaced by new, more complex power structures, which demand newer analytical approaches which address the politics of difference between and among women and men. **Gendered trade unions**

Although the gendered patterns of closure, exclusion, segregation and discrimination found in labour markets continue to be replicated in trade unions, these exist in a dynamic of continuous tension. We can conceptualise the social processes involved as a dialectic of gender power, resistance and mobilisation, where, as Coote and Campbell put it, 'We [women] shall need to fight with and against them [men] at the same time, often at the same moment.' In this struggle, women increasingly frame their demands around concepts of social justice, in particular Nancy Fraser's 3 Rs of recognition of difference, representation of the distinct voices and perspectives of the oppressed or disadvantaged, and redistribution in the face of inequality of resources between women and men. In this paper we too use this frame, identifying the gendered power relations in each, and applying these to our empirical findings.

Methods

In 2009-10 GLU alumni researchers from 11 countries collected data on membership, on gender roles in union structures, and equality policies, and collective bargaining gender agendas and team membership. Researchers distributed individual questionnaires to union leaders, and carried out interviews and discussions with women and men trade unionists in a range of unions and confederations. A draft report was developed and in 2010-11 further work is being carried out. The paper being proposed for this conference will draw on the work from both years.

New forms of power or leverage – reflexive discussion

The GLU alumni research group, Gender and Trade Unions, is itself both part of and a vehicle for gendered change in trade unions. Active participation in the group and in the research process is in itself political, and

is a case of theory into practice: praxis. It has 'conscientised' members, especially men from some African countries; commitment to work on levers for gender change has led to one national confederation agreeing to start collecting membership data by gender for the first time; solidarity has been generated among women and between women and men cross-nationally; asking research questions has unsettled, disturbed and interrupted normative and traditional masculinised labour values among trade union women respondents, and when the findings are published, will offer them a clearer voice, and visibility.

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Utilising new forms of power and leverage to influence international trade policy

Donna McGuire

The wide-spread adoption of neoliberal policies which promote trade liberalisation at the expense of worker's power and living conditions is pushing trade unions to find ways to influence trade policies and trade negotiations at the national and international level. At the same time, the current terrain of neoliberal globalisation and international trade liberalisation, provides an opportunity structure which facilitates the emergence of new forms of global and national resistance that link work-related concerns to wider social issues (Moody 1997, Tarrow 2005).

While the existence of such an opportunity structure may facilitate, and even encourage, unions to take action in the trade policy field, unions also face considerable restraints to their mobilising and organising capacity, including; declining union power (due to structural, economic and political changes), lack of formal representational capacity within the multilateral trade arena, exclusion from trade policy and trade negotiation processes at the national level (with some rare exceptions), lack of resources and expertise in trade and economic issues, and internal divisions over trade policy direction. In the face of these restraints how have unions been able to influence international and national trade policy? What sources of power and leverage have they drawn on as political actors in the trade arena? What factors have impacted on the availability and choice of power resources?

This paper will draw on empirical data from case studies of national and international trade campaigns in order to identify and analyse the various sources of union power which unions have utilised to mobilise in the political arena of international trade and the factors that have impacted on their availability and use. These cases reveal the importance of networking and coalition building as a way to leverage and strengthen associational power, the use of symbolic politics as a form of leverage, and the importance of knowledge and expertise as a source of discursive or 'productive' power.

The analysis is informed by insights from:

- Social movement theory concepts of political opportunity structure, resource mobilisation, framing, and repertoires of contention (see McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; Tarrow 1998; Benford and Snow 2000; Meyer 2004).
- Recent literature which theorises about new sources of union power, such as symbolic and logistical power, that can be used to leverage traditional sources of power (see Silver 2003; Chun 2005 and 2009; Webster et al. 2009);

- Union revitalisation literature, which see institutional vitality and coalition building as important sources of power (Frege and Kelly 2004; Behrens, Hamann, and Hurd 2004; Frege, Heery, and Turner 2004; Turner 2006; and Dörre, Holst and Nachwey 2009); and
- Discursive approaches which emphasise the “social processes, systems of knowledge through which meaning is produced, fixed, lived, experienced and transformed” (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 55), the contested nature of meaning attached to issues, and the capacity of language to “to make politics, to create signs and symbols that can shift power balances and that can impact on institutions and policy making” (Hayer 2006: 67).

Global Framework Agreement in Africa – Using the space created

Michelle Taal

As a tool developed by Global Union Federations (GUFs) to bring a social dimension to economic globalization there is now a good deal of discussion on the role of Global Framework Agreements (GFAs) and their efficacy in serving this purpose. With the first GFA signed as recently as 1989, it is too early to decide whether GFAs are a useful tool in the struggle for global solidarity or not. It is though time to examine some of their limitations and to look at processes which could make them more useful. Current discussions however make little reference to the issues and position of African workers and African trade unions in this regard and do not include the voices of these organisations and workers. This project is therefore focused on GFAs in Africa as a contribution to the global discussion.

Of the 74 current GFAs 55 have been signed with MNCs that have operations in African countries and may therefore include African workers in the terms and the protections of the agreements. The high proportion of agreements potentially affecting African workers and the increasing pace at which GFAs are being signed represents an important new dimension in labour relations in Africa to be utilised in the struggle for decent work and global solidarity.

The paper explores the perceptions, expectations and issues that African trade unions have with GFAs signed between GUFs and MNCs. It argues that while the limitations are to be acknowledged and, where possible, overcome, GFAs have created some useful space for African trade unions to organise, bargain, build campaigns, and to form alliances. This space may be smaller than some would like or expect, but it is recognised that the GFA is not the end of the battle, it is just one tool for organising workers to take on MNCs more strategically. If the small space created by the GFA is used effectively, further opportunities for engagement may be created.

The research therefore notes recommendations on what can be done by Global Union Federations (GUFs) at a global level, at a regional (African) level, and by national affiliates in Africa to engage with the GFA space for organising, democratising, educating and campaigning in Africa.

It has been decided to focus the research on the relationship of African GUF offices and African national affiliates to the GFAs in which they are involved rather than to do a broad analysis of GFAs in general. There is currently a good deal of analysis of GFAs, including an in-depth study undertaken at Berlin Free University, which is feeding into a global discussion on the way forward with GFAs. This research does not deal directly with nor speak to African trade unions, their expectations, experiences and perceptions of GFAs, which is the space intended to be filled by this paper.

METHODOLOGY

A literature review was carried out as well as an analysis of the current GFAs that cover MNCs with operations in Africa. This analysis was completed in order to ascertain how many and which companies this may include. It also draws out some key content areas in the agreements as they deal with the core principles covered, the scope and reach of the agreements and the implementation and monitoring processes included in the text.

Engaging the GUFs at all levels was a central part of the research process in order to discover how each level of the GUF, global, regional African and national affiliate, understands the relevance and issues of GFAs in Africa.

Two questionnaires were drafted in order to draw out the perceptions that GUFs, at a global, regional and national affiliate level have of GFAs in Africa. Responses were received from four GUF Head Offices and seven GUF Africa regional offices as well as the national affiliates of five of the GUFs in eight countries, totalling eleven responses from South Africa, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, and Ghana.

In order to expand on some of the issues noted in the questionnaires and to draw out experiences of GFAs in Africa, a focus group with senior representatives from the African GUF offices and representatives of national affiliates from South Africa was held in which the findings of the research were opened up for discussion and recommendations for the way forward were proposed. These are presented and expanded upon in this report.

Thursday, 29th September 2011

Topic : Alternatives & Solidarity Economy

An analysis of social economy projects in São Paulo as alternatives for economic development and social inclusion

Carlos Salas & Marcia Leite

In Brazil, there exists a very vocal movement that pushes for the advancement of social and solidarity economic projects, as a way to create jobs for the poor, develop a sense of working place democracy, and even advance towards a socialist transformation of the Brazilian economy.

There is an ample body of literature analyzing case studies of cooperatives, recovered factories and other social projects that can be brought together around the idea of a “social economy”. Also there is a special Federal government agency that seeks the promotion of this kind of projects.

This paper will use the results of a representative survey of social economy projects in São Paulo state in Brazil that includes different kinds of cooperatives, including those in the recycling business, recovered manufacturing factories, and some other economic activities. The questions that will be dealt with in the paper are: Are these experiences true alternatives to a real social transformation? Or are they mere alternatives for the social inclusion of marginalized people? Or are they simply a new form of precarized occupations? What are the real impact of these experiences in the economic development of the São Paulo state?

“Alternative Production and Consumption Relations?: Fair Trade, the State, and Cooperatives in the Global South”

Michelle Williams

In this article I explore the relation between the fair trade market in the North and producer cooperatives in the South. I specifically focus on three agricultural cooperatives in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and South Africa to look at the role of the market and the state in promoting equitable trade. Fair trade has gained considerable popularity among Northern consumers in the last decade. For many consumers, the assumption is that buying fair trade ensures producers in the South receive a fair price for their goods. In general this assumption holds true. However, fair trade is much more complex than simply offering fair prices to producers. Does fair trade constitute an alternative trading system or is it an attempt to constitute fairer conditions within the current system? What is the role of the state? What is the role of the market? These are the central questions explored in this article.

A Solidarity Economy Critique of Social Capital : Why Power Matters?

Vishwas Satgar

Beyond mainstream sociological theory, the concept of social capital has found a central place in development discourse. This contribution will trace its origins and how it fits into World Bank articulations.

It will show how the concept has a dual function. First to depoliticise development and present 'embedded social relations' as part of a technocratic approach to development. Second, to appropriate bottom up development as consistent with the neoliberal market paradigm of development. The concept of social capital is critiqued as part of bringing back an understanding of power relations into development and particularly the solidarity economy alternative. This contribution provides a conception of power as the basis for understanding the solidarity economy.

Mondragon: a successful cooperativist action

Marta Soler

The Mondragon cooperatives' group is today an alternative economy to capitalism: they can compete in the global market, became the seventh industrial group in Spain, and experienced no unemployment during recent and former economic crisis. The Mondragon valley has the least unequal distribution of income in Europe.

This paper will elaborate on different "successful cooperativist actions" that made this possible. The creation of their own baking system was key for the consolidation of the group; it made possible the development of a network of solidarity between cooperatives. There is a strong internal democracy rooted in assemblies that strengthens transparency and participation in decision-making. Expansion and internationalization is today necessary to be competitive but also a challenge for Mondragon cooperatives, which they are facing with principles that avoid exploitation. Mondragon demonstrates that democracy, humanity and economic success are possible and desirable for many workers, managers and citizens.

Thursday, 29th September 2011

Topic : Restructuring : Labour & Work

The Hobbitt's impact on Industrial Relations in New Zealand 2010

Carol Jess

The recent industrial dispute centred around the location and production of The Hobbitt movie in New Zealand is a compact and robust example of many of the issues facing trade unions around the world, particularly in countries where the neo-liberal "take" on industrial relations, or indeed "employment relations" holds sway. Within this, I want to look at what lessons could be learned by other unions in their strategy selection, and what, if anything, was gained by the union throughout this dispute.

This paper will look at the cause of the actors' dispute with the production company, and how the dispute itself, the union's relationships with its members, and the other workers in the film industry in New Zealand, and New Zealand's place in the global film industry were manipulated to serve the ends of a neo-liberal attitude to work and employment.

Additionally, this paper will look at the timeline of the dispute to counter the claims of the politicians that a change in employment law was required in order to prevent the "off shoring" of the production of The Hobbitt. I will also place the change in employment law in the context of further erosion of employment rights and protections in New Zealand under the National coalition government.

This paper will be written by reviewing the publicly available documents on the dispute, and also through interviews and discussions with some of the key trade union players in the dispute.

Assessing the merits of labour process theory in the context of the South African capital-labour balance

Lotta Takala-Greenish

This paper looks at how the South African capital-labour relationship has changed in the post-apartheid period with particular focus on the influence of global market pressures and domestic policy changes. The increasing mobility of capital, financialisation, and more closely regulated but also increasingly liberalised

trade patterns are among global factors that have influenced the nature of the South African capital-labour relation. Domestic changes such as a gradual shift towards pro-market policies, compartmentalisation of policymaking, the decline in government support through aggregate demand or active and targeted industrial policy have also influenced the South African capital-labour balance. Despite independent improvements in the positions and bargaining power of labour *and* capital, the net outcome has been a strengthening of the position of capital relative to labour. This is in part explained through the ability of capital to employ neoliberal policy to its own advantage. In part it is also explained by greater global capital mobility whilst labour mobility and ability to exercise power have not altered or have decline. Though global changes have played a significant role in the continuity of the capital dominance, the developments in South African labour have also reinforced the weakened labour position. Though these developments have parallels in other countries, the case of South African labour presents an unusual combination of compounded decline. The compounding in this case refers to the joint adverse pressure on labour arising from unexpected policy outcomes, narrowing and compartmentalisation of policy focus, but also the fragmentation of labour through structural changes to labour-intensive industries. The case of South Africa highlights the ongoing importance of exploring unique features of South Africa's labour process as a route to a better understanding of the capital-labour tension. These insights point to the need for further research in labour process theory.

The paper begins with an overview of the particular nature of capital-labour relations in South Africa. This is followed by an assessment of the global and domestic changes and the extent to which these changes have affected capital or labour or the tension between the two. Despite theoretical divisions, labour process theory can assist in explaining the strengthening of power associated with capital and the weakening of the relative labour position. Similarly, the features of the South African capital-labour balance and the evolution that has taken place post-apartheid can also serve to advance labour process theory.

The paper takes a qualitative and descriptive approach with the theoretical framework serving as an explanatory tool.

Contemporary Challenges for Health-Care Professionals in Malawi under Neoliberal Policies: *Understanding Migration and Shortage of Nurses in the Public Health Sector, 1993-2008*

Tiyamike H. Goliati

Background: Shortage of nurses in Malawian public health sector is affecting the ability of the remaining nurses to discharge their duties effectively. This scarcity has been exacerbated by existence of migration of nurses and other health-care personnel. Deterioration of the public health sector combined with the poor working environment and decreasing real wages repel the out-migration of nurses from the country's public health sector to private organisations and developed countries perceived to have good remuneration package and ideal working environment for their employees. The implementation of neoliberal policies in the country contributed to decreasing social spending for health and other social services that have a direct implication on social development.

Methodology: The research was aimed at understanding the migration and shortage of nurses in the public health sector in the context of contemporary challenges for health-care professionals in Malawi under neoliberal policies. It employed a mixed design approach. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15.0 for Windows. Qualitative data were done by content analysis and then analysed further by SPSS.

Results: Malawian nurses face multilayered challenges partly contributed by decreasing social spending for health and other social services largely due to the implementation of neoliberal policies in the country. Such challenges include: low salaries, low retirement benefits, inadequate accommodation, no access to Government loans for bedside nurses, insufficient resources/nurses, work overload, poor working conditions, scarce training opportunities, unsafe working environment.

Conclusion: the situation, however, is slightly changing due to increased government commitment towards health sector coupled with Keynesian measures in the economy. Nurses' attrition has been on a downward trend; outputs of nurses from training institutions have been rising; social and economic indicators have

been positive; and remuneration package, working conditions and working environment have been improving. Salaries in real terms have been rising in an attempt to reverse the decreasing real wages that rocked the labour market since neoliberal policies found its space in the Malawian policymaking.

Employment Outcomes and Labour Market Responses of the Crisis: The Case of IT and ITES Sector in India

Babu P. Remesh

India was already in the second stage of growth in the IT and ITES sector when the economy was hit by the financial crisis. The mellowness was visible, both in terms of 'economic upgradation' as well as in the 'social upgradation' front. From low end service sector activities (such as telecalling) Indian firms had advanced to more superior processes – such as legal processing, finance/accounting support, content design and consultancy services. Alongside this shift in process, there have also been several initiatives (by both the government as well as interested pressure groups) that promised a more stabilized growth for the sector. Both the central as well state governments were on the path of introducing better regulating frameworks to support the growth of the sector without compromising some welfare aspects of workers. Trade unions could also make some headway with the changing identities of workers - 'identity' as workers as opposed to executives. This resulted in growing worker collectivity to address the insecurities and vulnerabilities of the sector. Further, there have also been efforts from both business houses and the government to launch skill development and educational initiatives to support the sector with a more 'employable' labour force.

However, the crisis affected the sector adversely and has reverted many of the aforesaid positive gains. In this backdrop, the present paper assesses the impact of the crisis on workers in the IT and ITES sector in India. The paper which is based on field based insights gathered from ongoing and recently completed empirical research, analyses the changes in the employment relations in the industry and its impact on workers as well as the sector at large. The methodology engaged for data collection include structured interviews, open ended discussions and preparation of detailed ethnographic case studies. The paper provides separate discussions on both international and domestic segments of the outsourced work in the light of the ongoing transformations in the policy frameworks – both in India as well as in important outsourcing countries (e.g. US).

The paper also discusses the desirable steps and policy prescriptions required to restore the interest of workers in this highly footloose sector, who are specially disadvantaged due to the contradictions between possibilities of technology and the limitations of regulatory frameworks. It is expected that the paper will provide required inputs for drawing parallels from international contexts and thus help to arrive at possible conceptualizations and informed discussions on the impact of global economic crisis on working class across the world.

Labour time, worker's control and exploitation: A moment in the practical production politics of a group of rock drill operators on a South African platinum mine.

Paul Stewart

When labour time becomes the prism through which social analysis is conducted, its role in production reveals its formative character, both in and of production itself and more broadly in social life. The focus here is how a long-standing struggle of the informal and organic committees of a group of rock drill operators on a platinum mine finally came to turn around labour time expenditure. A mine shaft faced a political impasse after the rock drill operators embarked on a series of strikes, were dismissed en masse and the attempt to resolve issues after their reinstatement, failed. The machine operators' struggles are shown to have impacted powerfully on the mine where they worked: on production, on intra-working class relations and on their own trade union leadership. This paper tells the story of how they managed to collectively deploy their objective power in the mining labour process, actively participated in an unusual 'productivity deal', failed to succumb to the industrial relations system they had fiercely resisted, survived foregoing their own informal mteto (law) around which they had cohered - all in order to restore their old wage rates which management had punitively cut and which they successfully managed to restore. This they did without

seemingly having sacrificed an organic form of organisation, the character of which remains as yet occluded from the social scientific gaze.

Political and economic crisis and the meaning of work: the case of Zimbabwe

Ochard Sibanda

Zimbabwe has been in a political crisis in at least the past ten years. Many studies have explored this crisis from many perspectives but few have attempted to explore the plight of the ordinary workers and their perspective. The melt-down of the political economy in Zimbabwe, which reached climax in 2008 eroded workers earnings to precarious levels. Workers stayed away from claiming their earnings from the bank as a result of unprecedented hyper-inflation which almost instantly made it worthless. The average worker could not even afford the monthly transport cost to work. However, most of the workers ironically did not stay away from work. There are many factors that motivate people to work but remuneration is the prime one. Although the plight of the Zimbabwean workers has been told by many most is not based on empirical research. This study explores the plight of the Zimbabwean worker based on in-depth interviews. The study asserts that social networks established at workplaces and workplace facilities offer an alternative means and opportunities for workers to derive their livelihood.

Party Politics, Economic Agenda and Trade Unions: Nepali Context of Experience

Umesh Upadhyaya

Political economy of every nation requires naturally an adequate combination of politics, economic activities and socio-cultural realities in order to speed up the overall process of development. The Nepali context of politics is always in such a transition that economic agenda has never been given emphasis by the ruling parties. Thus lip-service has been dominant in the overall scenario and hence the issues of labour have not been considered by the state power. Based on the imported policy norms, policy makers have been basically guided by the IFI prescriptions and ground realities of the nation & working people are being ignored all the time.

In this context as a responsible trade union confederation, GEFONT Nepal has been in continuous efforts to intervene in policy matters. With its approach of policy intervention for achieving a pro-worker state by changing the state-character of capital-tilt, GEFONT started its move to gain power through unionization & mobilization of overwhelming mass of agricultural wage workers in addition to the formal sectors of employment, so that the stagnant character of Nepali society could be shaken adequately. So it moved forward with a policy of minimum wage declaration in every village body of the government, which compelled the national government to declare national minimum wage for agricultural workers. Strategy of organizing the informal economy workers in order to compel the government and policy makers to think also in a labour-angle and to diversify their technocratic approach of looking at capital, investment, business class and FDI. For instance the Nepali economy is currently based on remittances from abroad, but ruling groups and policy makers are focussed on statistics of remittances and not even bothering for a moment about the hardships of the remittance senders.

In this background, as a student of labour economics and as an active trade unionist, I have been a witness of changes on feudal society of Nepal, ups & downs of politics and actors, status quoists & radicals as well as emerging possibilities. So This paper will highlight on power equations of Nepal & its society, impacts of organizational activities and trade unions and continued efforts of a trade union centre to work for positive & fast changes in a multilateral frame of endeavour.

The paper will be based on published materials of Unions, statistics available and experiences as an actor & observer. Secondary information in the light of historical and analytical frame will be taken into consideration for looking into the past and into the forthcoming future. Definitely pro-labour approach will be dominant. As Nepali society and the state is passing through a very difficult transition and society is in the phase of heavy instability, options and possibilities may be many where the author will be selective.

Thus the paper will focus on:

- Character of nepali state & society and changing power equations
- Efforts of trade unions for a pro-worker change
- Possibilities within heavy uncertainties & instabilities

Thursday, 29th September 2011

Topic : Power of Labour, Labour of Power

New forms of power or leverage : Women in mining

Asanda Benya

The paper will look at gendered forms of power in relation to women in mining. It will first look at the challenges and coping strategies that women employ in underground work. It will show that women in mining, because of their physical and physiological differences to men are continuously subordinated and viewed by men as inferior and not capable of doing mine work. This subordination of women and masculinization of the underground labour force has led women to adopting various coping strategies and tapping into different forms of leverage to help them cope.

The main argument of the paper is that women in mining are using non-traditional forms of power and leverage to assert their positions. They are using their sexuality, exaggerating their femininity and ethnicity to get ahead. They are increasingly turning upside down the attributes that are associated with being a woman. What is seen and perceived to be negative by male miners is being used by women for their own good and to improve their working and financial conditions.

Some of the gender traits that women have turned upside down include their monthly periods. We show how instead of allowing men to use this to discriminate against them, they are using it to gain sympathy from men. We also look at how women take advantage of the fact that they cannot speak *fanakalo* to gain sympathy from the men that speak the same home as them. While ethnicity was previously used to segregate mine workers, women are tapping strategically on that to get favours from men without necessarily excluding other men, but making them jealous to a point where there is competition among men to help the women.

Data for this study was gathered through the use of two methods; participant observation and in-depth interviews. This afforded me the opportunity to participate in the natural daily lives of these women. I worked at a mine in Rustenburg for two and a half months doing underground work, changing between occupations and work crews. This allowed me to gather in-depth information on women in mining and go beyond their working lives to how they live in their respective communities.

“Struggle to the Death”: The Dynamics of Extreme Labour Contention in the South Korean Labor Movement

Jennifer Jihye Chun

Militant labor protests are a pervasive feature of contemporary South Korean life. From heated workplace battles over wages and working conditions to mass opposition against neoliberal economic restructuring and free trade agreements, Korean workers routinely take to the streets in the form of strikes, marches, mass demonstrations, and other forms of popular protest. Indeed, rare are the times when unions and labor activists are not mounting public opposition to people and institutions in power. The persistence of contentious labour politics in South Korea challenges conventional understandings about the nature of democratic life. Despite the end of authoritarian rule and the consolidation of a formal electoral democracy in 1987, unions and labor activists continue to pursue extra-institutional strategies to advance their economic and political demands. What explains the persistence of contentious labour politics in post-authoritarian South Korea? What role do neoliberal states and employers play in fueling militant unionism? What role do historically-sedimented cultures of resistance and mobilization play in the reproduction of extra-legal

protests? This paper reflects upon the militant and mobilized character of the Korean labor movement by examining the dynamics of union struggles among irregularly-employed (*pijŏng'gyujik*) workers. In particular, I am interested in examining the interplay between democracy, neoliberalism and repertoires of labour contention among socially, economically and politically disadvantaged groups of workers. Since 1999, there has been a steady increase and diversification in union struggles waged by irregularly-employed workers – from independently-contracted golf caddies and truck drivers to subcontracted janitors and retail cashiers. This paper will survey cases between 1999 and 2010 to analyze how and under what conditions labour unions attempt to redress the grievances of irregularly-employed workers, the majority of whom represent socially disadvantaged women workers in precarious and atypical jobs. Data for cases is drawn primarily from union press releases and solidarity requests, newspapers and other media reports, ILO reports, and information circulated by related organizations including women's organizations, human rights organizations and labour research organizations. My findings reveal that union struggles waged by irregularly-employed workers reflect a trajectory of heightened and prolonged forms of labour contention, including the use of extreme tactics such as scaling building towers, shaving union leaders' heads, engaging in life-threatening hunger strikes and even, worker suicides. While the blatant refusal of employers and the state to recognize the legitimacy of union demands plays a major role in fueling extreme forms of labour contention, protest cultures also play a significant role in reproducing cultures of opposition and militancy.

Making labour voices heard in impending industrial crisis – the garment industry of Bangladesh

Pragya Khanna

“Capital is dead labour, that, vampire- like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” Karl Marx, (*Capital*, Volume 1, Chapter 10)

The above quote by Marx perhaps aptly defines the condition of Bangladesh's key export division and major foreign exchange earner industry- The Garments Industry. The independence of Bangladesh came at the time when global capital was already facing a profitability crisis, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system and a cartelization of OPEC countries. Bangladesh's urge to industrialise and establish an independent economy amidst a turbulent local political scenario made it fall in the grips of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs). The IFIs in the 1970s were desperately trying to consolidate their position globally, ushering a new accumulation regime based on financialisation (a global networking through finance) and post-fordist (flexibilist) industrialization. The former made the local economies vulnerable to the demands of the IFIs and other transnational agencies, while the latter disarmed labour through contractualisation and casualisation of work – increased labour market segmentation, thus marginalizing the working classes' capacity to influence industrial relations. Only by persuading the developing economies to adopt an export-oriented development approach, the IFIs could bring these economies to their arena of sustained control and influence. Through various financial instruments like aid agreements, this persuasion could become successful in the developing world. The export processing zones (EPZs) were the result of an integration of developing economies in the new accumulation regime that was emerging internationally.

Since the 1970s, various other factors such as the Multi Fiber Arrangement, a quota system used as a means of controlling the increasing imports to the West from developing countries in Asia and South America, which Bangladesh did not ratify, gave the developed countries open access to the economy of Bangladesh as no quota was imposed on how much Bangladesh could export. All these factors, along with the formation of Export Processing Zones, collaborated, and allowed the garment industry to emerge as the single largest manufacturing unit in Bangladesh. 80% of the country's \$18 billion export earnings come from the readymade garment sector. 3.5 million People (40% of industrial workforce) are employed in this sector and 85% of them are women.

The integration of the 'peripheral' Third World economies in the new global accumulation regime (known as neoliberalism) smoothed the entry-exit of multinational capital, which could economise on production cost by exploiting cheap labour and other resources of these economies. The intricacies of industrial relations in the garment industry of Bangladesh can be understood within this context. Workers in this

industry are highly vulnerable obtaining low wages (Bangladeshi garment workers get the lowest wages in the world!) and facing unhealthy working conditions. Trade unions and organizing of women labour force are openly countered with state assistance. Minimal industrial regulations available are flouted openly.

However, lately the garment industry has witnessed a tremendous rise in industrial conflicts. While suffering from extreme exploitation, the growing resentment of workers in this industry is now reflected in spontaneous labour unionization and movement. Mapping the working conditions, leading to a class conflict ridden industry is essential to understand this sudden upsurge. The legal framework that binds these conflicts must be taken into account. Examination of responses of factory owners, trade union leaders, worker leaders, state, and labour also become central for any study of the course and direction of the movement. This paper tries to understand the essential character of the movement, whilst outlining the indicators of globalized capitalist development in Bangladesh. In a nutshell, this paper tries to understand the emergence of these conflicts putting them in the larger political economic context.

METHODOLOGY UTILIZED: The paper is based on: Secondary research: Official data, Civil society reports, Research studies and Articles

Primary research in Bangladesh: Both unstructured and structured interviews with: 3 trade unionists 2 representatives of the Communist Party. 2 garment worker leaders 2 lawyers- 1 of who was arrested recently and blamed for starting the labour unrest. 2 garment factory owners 2 activists who are the spearheads of movements in Bangladesh, and are closely related to garment labour issues- the Phulbari movement (Anti coal mine), the Bangladesh Environment Movement.

Focused group discussion with: 25 garment factory workers involved with movement- who have been fired by the managers on account of striking.

Old and New Forms of Power in the Workplace. The Case of the Construction Sector in India

Valentina Proseri

If we think about working people, their families and communities throughout the world, we see how our time is characterised by informalisation of labour, unemployment, national and global social inequality, and the “slummification” of cities. The power of the business interests grew stronger and stronger, to the point of conquering the state on its side. Labour is potentially a key social force of the excluded majority, “has a crucial role to play in countering the destructive logics of capitalism. The politics of labour is about altering the balance of power away from capital and unelected bureaucracies toward labour and broader society. The politics of labour is also about overcoming the multiple relations of power and oppression, including the economic, political, gender, ethnic *and* cultural, that contribute to and reproduce the power of the few and the subordination of the many”. Labour is trying to move attacks against capital in this age of global economic crisis, although this does not happen everywhere, in any sector. This paper presents such an example.

India is characterised, at the same time, by the rising power and wealth of certain social classes and by the increasing marginalisation and exploitation of other social classes and communities. As per what concern rights at work, the striking prevalence of informal labour relations and underemployment makes mobilisation of workers very difficult.

The construction industry in India is growing, but the conditions of its workforce are not improving accordingly. The labourers employed are increasingly migrant, and very difficult to unionise and organise. The employers use the traditional fragmentation of the labour force for hiring and managing the workers. The labourers look for alliances with other social forces for trying to protect their rights, being the students in the University campuses of Delhi for enforcing their rights to be paid, or the trade unions of the employers in the Southern province for defending their employment against the menace of cheap migrant labour.

The argument of this paper is that labour in the construction industry in India has not much space for maneuvering, given the social structure of the labour force and the predominant preoccupation that the state has for the gainful functioning of capital more than with the respect of the rights of workers.

The information presented have been gathered during repeated visits to the worksites and through interviews to key informants, participatory observation, focus group and in-depth structured interview to workers (questionnaires), between March 2008 and February 2009.

Friday, 30th September 2011

Topic : Non-Traditional Labour

'Bonded capital' and the organisation of home-working in India

Alessandra Mezzadri

The informal economy dominates the economic landscape of many developing regions. Initially conceived as a residual sector, marginalised from processes of capitalist transformation, today this economy is finally recognised as a fundamental feature of these processes as well as a fundamental arena to understand the complexity of class structures in the developing world. The process of globalisation, far from erasing informal economic relations, has in many cases reinforced them and used them at its own advantage. In particular, the process of informalisation of labour has gone hand in hand with globalising architectures of production. Today, this process entails at least two trends. On the one hand, it entails the 'informalisation of the formal' (Chang, 2009), i.e. the progressive substitution of formal labour relations with informal ones. The different casualised and precarious forms of labour inhabiting the new global factories in many parts of Africa, Asia or Latin America are clear examples of this trend. On the other hand, however, globalising production has also entailed the subsumption of traditional informal production and labour structures into the global economy. Due to a combination of these tendencies, In India, which this paper focuses on, informal labour today represents an astonishingly 93% of total labour (NCEUS, 2007). The ways in which this labour is organised and managed vary considerably; from region to region, from sector to sector and, within the same region and the same sector, according to different production realms. Increasingly, many export-oriented sectors, which are tightly connected to the global economy, work across different production realms, which link factory and non-factory production, as well as the urban and rural economy. Crucial to the working of many of these fragmented production systems, defined by high levels of sub-contracting, is a heterogeneous category of actors, generally defined as 'middlemen', 'contractors' or 'vendors'. The study of the behaviour of these actors is fundamental to understand how labour is organised at the very bottom of global production chains, in home-working and household networks. This paper presents evidence coming from the peri-urban and rural areas around Bareilly, a town in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The main garment export centres located in northern India- Delhi in particular- send here huge quantities of both finished and unfinished garments for embroidery activities. Local contractors distribute these items to homeworkers and households units, effectively managing their subsumption into the global production system. In presenting the profile and behaviour of these actors, this study pays particular attention to two different aspects. First, it shows the contractors' struggle to reproduce their links with exporters. These links, which have always been precarious and volatile, have become even more tenuous in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and its impact on export-oriented patterns of industrialisation. Second, the study focuses on payment systems along the supply chain; from exporters to contractors, and then from contractors to homeworkers and households. Based on the analysis of these systems, this study argues that contractors are a form of disposable capital- 'bonded capital'- whose strategies for survival are varied, risky and apt at reproducing the poverty of labouring classes. This point has several theoretical and policy implications, which the paper seeks to address in the conclusions. Inspired by a political economy approach, this study is informed by empirical evidence collected in India between September 2004 and July 2005, and then between March and April 2010. Methods of enquiry are mainly qualitative, based on open/semi-structured interviews, life histories and field observations.

The grown and orgnaisation of a precariat : Working in the clothing industry in Johanensburg's Inner city

Katherine Joynt and Edward Webster

In the early nineties South African industry moved away from its protectionist past towards a more open and integrated economy. As clothing and textile industries were previously amongst the most highly protected of South Africa's industries, enterprises faced intense pressure to become more competitive and cut costs . An estimated 80 000 clothing workers lost their jobs in the 1990s as cheaper clothing and textiles were imported from East Asia . Under the impact of liberalisation, labours' collective power was weakened by fragmentation of the labour market through decentralisation of production, casualisation, part-time work and the accompanying outsourcing of workers to a third party. Guy Standing speaks of the creation of this new class of vulnerable workers as a precariat.

The central question raised in this paper is the nature of the growth and organisation of this precariat in the clothing industry in inner city Johannesburg. Drawing on surveys, visual ethnography and non-participant observation, the paper provides a sociological portrait of this precariat. We do this by describing their workplaces and the conditions under which these predominantly illegal immigrants work. Three research interventions were undertaken over a five year period; in 2007, in 2009 and again in 2011.

The paper is divided into three parts: in Part One we focus on Johannesburg's Fashion District and the restructuring of the industry. We identify the growth of micro and small clothing factories , called Cut Make and Trims (CMTs), housed in the cramped rooms of the dilapidated building of the inner city. The majority of the enterprises in the Fashion District are linked to small, primarily domestic value chains and there are few production links from larger factories in the district to the micro-enterprises in surrounding areas. For the most part, factories in the Fashion District are neither export-oriented, nor are they linked to international brand names.

Part Two identifies what we call the decent work deficit, the low wages, lack of security and inadequate representation of these workers. In Part Three we describe the attempts made by the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU) to close the representational gap by organising informal workers in the inner city. SACTWU recognises the different needs of these workers and has introduced new organisational strategies and modes of representation.

The union believes that its only source of power is moral pressure on retailers to refuse to deal with enterprises that are non-compliant. This, we suggest, is not sufficient pressure on employers to reduce the decent work deficit. We conclude by arguing that the only association that has deep support amongst these workers are faith based associations and that religion is a neglected source of union power. To harness this power the union would need to form coalitions of mutual interest with churches and mosques in inner city Johannesburg.

"Undocumented but entitled to rights" The controversial relationships between German unions and undocumented migrants

Sönke Rabisch

Introduction: A distinctive part of Globalisation is the increase of migration. Approximately 200 million people do not live in their countries of origin. Germany is one of the largest countries to take in migrants. The biggest amount of migration is labour migration motivated by the expectation of better working and living conditions. Due to their lack of status immigrants without status of residence have to try to enter the informal job market. In Germany job opportunities for male migrants are especially in the construction areas in which "illegal" workers are always in danger of police raids. Contrary, female labour migration takes mostly place in private households. 2.9 million private house-holds in Germany employ a housemaid (almost exclusively women) on a permanent basis. Only 40.000 of them have regular contracts. For most of the time, German unions have not dealt with the issue of migration at all or promoted a restrictive policy to combat wage and social dumping. The union policy

on migrants has only been changing recently. In 2008 the public service union ver.di in the area of Hamburg has created the first German trade union advice centre for migrants without a secure right of stay.

Aim and methodology of the paper: The paper analyses the dimension of allies between labour and migrant movements on the basis of the case of the ver.di advice centre for clandestine people. This includes a literature review about labour migration in Germany and union strategies. A key focus lies on the legal situation of migrants. According to German law workers under irregular working conditions have the same rights as regular workers including the rights of remuneration (collective agreement), for medical treatment and statutory payment in the case of sickness and occupational accidents and the right of legal minimum vacation. However, the key problem is in enforcing these rights without being deported. The ver.di centre aims at giving legal assistance on an individual basis and to strengthen the collective mobilisation ability of migrants. In-depth interviews with key stakeholders from ver.di and migrant organisations and communities analyse the different dimensions and problems.

The paper discusses if the regional case of the ver.di advice centre in Hamburg can be a successful model on a national and global level and how it could contribute to union revitalisation.

A Transnational Plantation Precariat. Challenges to Organising Migrant Workers in the Malaysian Palm Oil Industry

Oliver Pye

In Malaysia and Indonesia, the primitive accumulation of palm oil expansion daily sets new small-scale farmers “free” to join the ranks of the plantation proletariat. The development success of the palm oil industry is dependent on a low-wage labour regime. In the Malaysian plantations, close to half a million migrant workers from Indonesia harvest the palm oil fruit that fuel a multi-billion-dollar industry. Their work and life conditions are characterised by a high degree of precarity. Not only are they on short term contracts, many are caught within a web of outsourcing agents and subcontractors. The lack of political rights as migrant workers is exacerbated by the fact that an estimated half of the workers are deemed “illegal” and are subjected to regular expulsion waves by the Malaysian state.

This paper sets out to explore some of the challenges and potentials of organising among migrant workers in the palm oil sector. It is based on ongoing empirical work with groups of plantation workers in Indonesia and Malaysia. The project combines biographical interviews with problem-focussed interviews and group discussions over a three year period. Theoretically, it draws on discussions on the challenge of precarisation as it is discussed in the European labour movement (Bordieu, Castel, Candeias, Dörre) to see if the concept is relevant to the labour movement in Southeast Asia. Following Foucault and Scott, it looks both at governmentality and politics of acceptance and resignation but also at hidden transcripts of everyday and collective resistance. It also looks at the potential of new transnational spaces (Pries) and of activist networks (Tarrow) for organising across borders.

The paper presents initial findings concerning key aspects of precarity in the lives of the migrant workers and their coping strategies and discusses some of the main challenges workers have in developing a transnational workers movement in the plantations. It also discusses the question of the workplace and other places as sites of resistance to different aspects of the precarity regime. In this context, the question of alliances with peasant organisations (e.g. La Via Campesina) and with transnational environmental justice movements working around palm oil issues is important. In the political campaigns against the development paradigm implied in the false solution of agrofuels, the workers in the plantations and along the transnational chains of production of these new industries have yet to take centre stage. In an emerging movement for conversion and for climate justice, the role of this new precariat will be crucial.

Organizing Informal Labor in India and Indonesia: A Discussion of Barriers and Best Practices of Overcoming Them

John Folkerth and Tonia Warnecke

A key aspect of facilitating a transformation to a more just and equitable society should be the facilitation of decent work, through the adoption of labor standards. Yet the majority of global workers are engaged in vulnerable, informal work that offers very little (if any) welfare protection. While there are many possible

ways to improve the conditions of work in the informal sector, this paper focuses on organizing as an agent for change. Organizing the informal sector is particularly important given the general lack of labor law enforcement in the developing world; unions and non-governmental organizations can work to support decent work conditions while raising public awareness of labor issues and lobbying for increased enforcement capacity. The pressure to enforce labor laws and regulations can thus spread through multiple levels of civil society. Toward this end, we undertake an analysis of two Asian countries with particularly high proportions of informal sector employment—Indonesia and India. We highlight the status of unionization in both countries, the political and institutional structures affecting unionization, and the division between organization of the informal and formal sectors. We also highlight successful examples of unionization of the informal sector in each country, and how these groups have successfully overcome barriers to organization. In so doing, we highlight the variety of possible strategies for successfully organizing informal sector workers; we also show that similar barriers to organizing the informal sector may be manifested differently across countries according to country-specific institutional structures and cultural norms.

Explaining strike violence in post apartheid South Africa

Crispen Chinguno

Strike action and the associated violence in South Africa was part of the strategy against the apartheid regime. This, coupled with the lack of an institutionalised industrial relations regime explained strike violence in apartheid South Africa. Violence in strikes was expected to be of limited significance after the democratization process and institutionalization of industrial conflict. Nevertheless, violence in strikes has remained a significant phenomenon in post apartheid industrial relations. The paper investigates variations in strike violence in post apartheid South Africa and attempts to explain the underlying meanings and significance. It explores what accounts for the presence or absence of strike violence in post apartheid South Africa. Drawing from a triangulation of in depth archival research, case studies, interviews and observations; to allow the phenomenon to be viewed from different perspectives; the study asserts that strike action and associated violence is an element within complex and broader workers and community struggles. It further attempts to establish the connections between violence in strikes and the popular violence in post apartheid South Africa.

Friday, 30th September 2011

Topic : Labour & Policy

Minimum Wage Developments in Russian Federation

Anna Bolsheva

Started from the financial sector, the crisis greatly affected industrial and service sectors in Russia. This resulted in the considerable social and economic implications for the labour, in particular in the unemployment rate growth, nominal and real wages reduction, drop in living standards.

It is acknowledged that minimum wage policy could be one of the instruments which can help to prevent a general decline in the level of wages and living standards.

The aim of the proposed paper is to analyze effectiveness of the minimum wage policy in Russia and its impact on living standards in the country. The study focuses on the minimum wage settings and developments mainly since 2002, when the new Labour Code was adopted in Russia.

In order to picture the minimum wage developments in the system of Russian industrial relations and economic context the research will provide the analysis of the recent economic trends in Russia, including the brief discussion on the impact of the global financial crisis on the country's economy. Concerning the industrial relations analysis the role of trade unions will be specifically considered.

It is the scope of the study to look at the development of the real minimum wages, relationships between average and minimum wages, relationship between minimum wages and living wages/subsistence minimum, wage structure and the share of employees receiving the minimum wage to total number of

employees in the country. For the case of Russian Federation it is especially important to analyze the subsistence minimum indicator, since it is directly linked to the size of the minimum wage.

In terms of qualitative analysis it is proposed to examine link between the minimum wage and social security benefits, relationships between minimum wage and collective bargaining, minimum wage effect on the formal economy. The research is also focused on the trade unions' position regarding the role of the minimum wages and their possibilities to enforce minimum wage in the formal and informal economy. It is especially important in respect to the recent negotiations on general agreement with government and employers.

It is also in the scope of the research to considered political and theoretical debates concerning the minimum wage developments. In particular, it is important to describe the main points of view on the interdependence between the minimum wage increase and the growth of unemployment and inflation.

It is also proposed to analyse what changes need to be undertaken for a more functional minimum wage development and for the enforcement of the minimum wage in Russian Federation.

Prospects for a Critical Labour Psychology

Thomas Ryan

This paper is based upon doctoral research into perceptions of British trade unions from ethnic minority communities in Newcastle upon Tyne. Initial research questions regarding these perceptions, and how they relate to any desired role for and approach to engagement from trade unions were couched in terms of community unionism.

The content and parameters of these original questions spanned several relevant themes in critical approaches to psychology. The theoretical lens for this investigation drew together a range of themes from critical psychology literature to examine the case for development of a critical labour psychology. Viewed through the theoretical lens constructed, literature on the topic of ethnicity in British trade unions was reviewed to sharpen the focus of the empirical phase of the investigation.

This synthesis produced refined research questions that sought to make the personal political through contextualised knowledge based on the lived experience of those participating. Adopting an approach to narrative methodology intended to contribute to social change, community workers and activists involved in challenging health inequalities in Newcastle upon Tyne took part in work history interviews with prompts regarding perception, desired role and approach to engagement from trade unions. Additionally, trade union participants with practical experience of organising where ethnic identity was a factor were interviewed to explore how they approached such difference. This was done to discern from their stories any organisational barriers within British trade unions to approaches that recognised cultural difference in the practice of collective organising.

This paper will explore the prospects for a critical labour psychology by:

- Summarising published accounts of previous attempts to apply psychological understanding to trade union organising and workplace collective action.
- Synthesising themes from critical psychology that offer novel perspectives on issues related to community engagement and trade union organising.
- Illustrating with reference to current research on community unionism and ethnic minority perceptions of British trade unions.

Minimum Wages and Deflation : Evidence from the Great Depression in the 1930s and present deflationary developments

Hansjörg Herr and Milka Kazandziska

One of the things which became clear after the outbreak of the financial crisis in the US in 2007 and its domino effect on the rest of the world was that the debate about minimum wages should be taken from under the rug where it stayed for some decades before and be placed on government agendas. After the

subprime crisis deflationary developments in Western countries became a real danger again. In some European countries deflation seems to be unavoidable. Japan already suffered in the 2000s from deflationary developments. Even if a period of higher natural resource and food prices trigger an inflationary development and liquidity created by central banks an asset price inflation, next crises could bring the danger of deflation back.

In contrast to neoclassical approaches deflation is not only caused by a lack of goods market demand, but it is mainly the result of a collapse of the nominal wage anchor (falling nominal unit-labour costs). Labour market institutions became penetrated by deregulation and trade unions in many countries are weak. An escalation of the crisis or a new deep economic shock easily can lead to falling wages and disastrous deflationary developments. Statutory minimum wages can support wage bargaining by unions and help to prevent deflation.

Thus, in the present constellation we find it necessary to open a debate about the role of minimum wages in preventing a collapse of the wage floor and hence, being an anchor against a deflationary development. Furthermore, minimum wages can be used to compress the wage structure and secure a more equal income distribution. We argue that had there been a minimum wage in the US in the 1930s, the effects of recession could have been weakened and the economy would have recovered sooner.

To illustrate our points, we plan on using a parallel between the Great Depression in the 1930s in the US, the financial and economic crisis in Japan in the 1990s and 2000s and the financial crisis of 2008/2009 and its deflationary effects for example on some European countries. Our paper will be organized in a way that we will start with introducing the main questions we would like to deal with in the paper. Then a theoretical discussion about the relationship between wages, prices and distribution will be provided. In the third section we plan to discuss about minimum wages and the role of the latter, whereby a special emphasis will be put on the effectiveness of minimum wages in the process of preventing a deflationary development. In the section that follows we would focus on the relationship between wages and deflation in the US in the 1930s, Japan in 1990s and some European countries since 2008 until today. At the end of the paper we will provide conclusions and policy recommendations about the importance of minimum wages especially in times of deflationary dangers.

This paper is one of several papers which will be offered to the conference. All papers are the output of a GLU research group about minimum wages and cash payments to create a wage floor. A session with several papers about this topic would be highly beneficial.

Conventional versus Contemporary Powers in labour Market Regulation in Ghana

Angela D. Akorsu

Globalization in tandem with multinational corporations has threatened the effectiveness of conventional regulatory efforts by national states as well as by trade unions. The organization of production along value chains, the daunting challenges posed by informality as well as the inherent weaknesses in the state-driven regulation have led to an emergence and a proliferation of alternatives sources of power for labour standards governance, monitoring and regulation. Consumers and civil society pressure groups have emerged as new institutional actors in labour standards monitoring, and firms have developed their code of conduct for ensuring high labour standards along their supply chains. However, empirical investigations into the viability and applicability of these initiatives in a developing country like Ghana are scarce and remain an intriguing question that needs to be answered.

This paper fills this research gap through a combination of a survey of the employees and some managers of 248 firms in the manufacturing sector of Ghana as well as 43 interviews with key informants from among the social partners as well as from the Consumers Association of Ghana. All interviews were conducted in Ghana face-to-face by the author between 2008 and 2009. The primary data was supplemented by secondary data.

The paper concludes that the contemporary firm-based regulation has not served as an effective alternative to the conventional regulation and monitoring by the state. The prospect of achieving higher labour standards depends on the joint effort of governments, trade unions, civil society institutions and employers. Without the strong will and effective law enforcement mechanism of the government, upholding and

improving labour standards in Ghana and in many other developing countries will continue to be an ideal rather than a reality.

The trade union movement and the 2008 and 2009 economic crisis

José Dari Krein & José Ricardo Barbosa Gonçalves

The recent economic crisis did not affect Brazil neither in the same way nor for so long as it did in many other countries all over the world. After the second half of 2009, the country resumed the growth very intensively. The estimated growth for 2010 is 7,5% of GDP. Brazil overcame the crisis quickly due to the economic conditions achieved in 2008 and due to the policies adopted by the government. Despite some inconsistencies in the beginning, the government policies were very broad, some of its main actions are the maintenance of the credit availability, the implementation of tax reductions, the maintenance of the social expenditure (broadening the unemployment benefits, increasing the amount paid by the “bolsa família” (income transfer program) and increasing the real minimum wage) and the reduction of the primary surplus goal. Some of those actions were result of negotiations with the main trade union confederations, who acted jointly during the crisis. The spaces for dialogue between the federal government and the trade unions were built in president Lula's first mandate, the trade union agent autonomy however, was questioned. In this sense, the first aim of this article is to discuss the trade union movement relation with the government regarding the strategy definition to overcome the crisis, by identifying the proposals, the mobilisations and the negotiations bi and trilateral. In order to understand this relation it is necessary to analyse the recent history of the trade union movement, focusing in the first decade of XXI century.

The trade union action has another dimension: the actions and negotiations within the professional categories. In this sense, the paper is based on a survey conducted in five major unions from the State of São Paulo (two metalworkers union, one commerce workers union, one construction workers union and one bank workers union), between September 2008 and December 2009. The research presentation highlights two aspects: the trade union actions and the result of collective bargaining. Among the union activities it identifies the mobilisations conducted by the categories (strikes, demonstrations, one-day strikes, etc) and the actions held together with other social agencies and unions. In the field of collective bargaining, it analyses the collective contracts (companies agreements and industry conventions). The analysis considers the different crisis impacts and the union representation in the selected economic sectors.

The crisis triggered many union initiatives from the professional categories and pressured the public sector. Within the sector of economic activity, mobilisations - especially in the sector more affected by the crises (industry) - had an important role to delay layoffs and to mitigate the effects of layoffs. Regarding the negotiations with the federal government, the relation with a friendly government weight more than the trade union power to mobilise the workers.

Changing the Growth Path? Economic Policy and South Africa's System of Accumulation

Samantha Ashman

The neoliberal period of capitalist development has been marked by raising the rate of exploitation, the restructuring and internationalization of capital, and the increasing financialisation of economic and social life. The effects of financialisation have been felt dramatically in recent years as financial crisis first spread to produce a major global crisis in the real economy, followed by the sort of emergency state intervention not witnessed in decades in order to bailout the banks, and now the politics of austerity as rising budget deficits are being cut.

The most obvious effect of the global crisis in South Africa has been the devastating loss of over one million jobs. Arguably, however, South Africa was in crisis before the onset of the global recession. The ANC government's pursuit of macroeconomic orthodoxy over social and political reforms has entailed extensive trade and financial liberalisation, including the progressive removal of financial and exchange controls from 1995. But the effect of neoliberal financialisation in South Africa needs to be understood in the context of a particular structure of production. The South African economy, both historically and today, is dominated by and dependent upon a cluster of industries (heavily promoted by the state) around mining and energy - raw

and semi-processed mineral products, gold, diamond, platinum and steel, coal, iron and aluminium - or what has been called the 'Minerals Energy Complex' (Fine and Rustomjee 1996).

Since 1994 a conspicuous lack of investment has been accompanied by an outflow of funds as major corporations have partially withdrawn from South Africa, choosing offshore listing and the internationalisation of their operations and building up of foreign assets over domestic investment, while remaining operations have concentrated further on profitable core MEC sectors. These outflows of profits and dividends have contributed to the current account deficit which is amongst the highest in the world. Before the crisis, high world commodity prices encouraged short-term capital flows into South Africa, mostly to equity and to bonds. This was accompanied by rising consumer debt which was largely spent on imported luxury cars and second homes, producing a massive property bubble. This type of growth created few jobs and as luxury spending has increased imports, it has added further pressure on South Africa's current account. The result was relatively rapid growth in GDP but a growing trade deficit and renewed dependence on mining based exports. Since the crisis, 'Quantitative Easing' or keeping US interest rates low to stimulate the US economy, has led to increasing flows of 'hot money' to developing world where interest rates are higher and which has produced a record rise in the value of the Rand, the single most traded emerging market currency. The real effective exchange is at its highest levels since 1990 (from when data is available) with a high Rand favourable to those who wish to get their money out as well as those who wish short term entry, but harsh for (manufacturing) exporters.

To some extent this has been recognised in political and policy debate. The shift in the leadership of the ANC from Mbeki to Zuma is independent of the current crisis, but not of the policy measures attached to neo-liberalism and financialisation. There are widespread calls for South Africa to move towards becoming a 'Developmental State'.

and Economic Development Minister Ebrahim Patel has proposed a 'New Growth Path' which 'places employment at the centre of government economic policy' and puts the economy on a 'production-led trajectory' rather than the consumption-led growth of recent years. It aims to create five million jobs over the next ten years, reduce the official unemployment rate from 25% to 15% by 2020, to co-ordinate macro and microeconomic level interventions and to promote growth in six key economic sectors (infrastructure, agriculture, mining, the green economy, manufacturing and tourism). However this – so far – has been combined with a *cut* in the budget deficit, instead of an increase in borrowing; no reduction in Interest Rates and a major *relaxation* of exchange controls, not their tightening. International headquarter companies based in South Africa will be allowed to 'raise and deploy capital offshore without exchange control approval' from January 2011 allowing assets to be taken out of the country without paying the current 10% exit levy. Exchange controls on domestic companies are to be reformed to remove barriers to international expansion. Exchange controls and limits on offshore investments for individuals are also to be lifted, as are restrictions on the 'blocked assets' of emigrants

The South African Reserve Bank had already announced an Exchange Control Voluntary Disclosure Programme' (VDP), effectively an amnesty for illegal capital flight.

The paper will critically evaluate the Zuma government's approach to economic policy, arguing that ANC policy continues to reinforce rather than challenge the Minerals Energy Complex which still usefully characterizes the South African system of accumulation. More radical policy choices are necessary than currently being discussed if South Africa is to meet the basic needs of the majority. Such policy measures would involve the extension of state intervention and public expenditure to underpin the provision of basic needs such as housing, transport, health and education and to aid the diversification of the economy and reduce mass unemployment. Radical policy reform would also entail the reform of the financial system so that it meets necessary levels of public and private investment rather than, as at present, aiding the export of capital in pursuit of short-term profitability. Without such measures, South Africa is likely to remain one of the most unequal societies in the world, marred by record levels of unemployment and dependent on a particular form of industrialisation inherited from its apartheid past.

Decent work and self-employed workers in the urban informal sector: “Conflicting issues” or “Converging realities”?

Debdulal Saha

This study is an attempt to understand the working conditions of self-employed workers in the urban informal sector from the normative view point of ‘decent work’ in the light of empirical evidences. By definition, it seems that the concept of decent work is more appropriate to wage workers in the formal and informal sectors. Nevertheless, the ILO is concerned with all workers, including self-employed workers. The study has considered the street vendors in Mumbai who are self-employed workers in the urban informal sector. The main purpose of this paper is to conceptualise the decent work approach with regard to the self-employed street vendors and to assess the applicability of this concept thereupon. How far has this concept been realised in practice is the issue which has been addressed in this paper. In analytical framework, the paper has dealt with 400 individual sample respondents under mixed methodology paradigm. It has broadly focused on public space utilisation, credit accessibility and unionisation as major indicators while addressing the concept. Factor analysis has been used to identify and conceptualise the above mentioned indicators.

This study is exploratory in nature. It shows that the current working hours of the vendors, the safety and security conditions in their workplace together with the illegal activities of local authorities, are contributing to a deteriorating working environment and acute deprivation of these workers. There is the existence of a ‘shadow economy’ as these vendors are exploited in the hands of those very persons from whom they are getting their credit as well as other support. This entire process is self-perpetuating because there an acute lack of formal recognition of their economic activities. They need to have a proper right to utilise the public space; right to access the institutional credit and right to participate actively in union activities. These have been identified in this model, as major factors which contribute to their welfare. Moreover, it has also been derived from the model that the above mentioned indicators are interrelated and can be converged.

It has been observed that there is an imperative need for progressive realisation both from the above and below along with state intervention to bring about a major reform in the existing structure, to insulate these workers from the perils of economic downturn and to ensure their effective survival throughout.

Friday, 30th September 2011

Topic : Alternatives & Solidarity Economy

The Recovered Factories and the Argentine Labour Movement: A grey zone in a ‘new’ social movement

Bruno Dobrusin

This essay will attempt to connect the movement of recovered factories in Argentina with both historical Peronism but also with the current ongoing Peronism in its different forms, centered on the Peronist trade unions. . The analysis will look at traditional Peronist culture and ideology developed since the first government of General Peron, and its links to current Peronist movements as well as to the recovered factories phenomenon. The main connection between the *fabrica* movement and Peronism in its functional structural aspects will be done through an analysis of the Peronist government of Carlos Menem in the 1990s. The analysis will include the reconfiguration of traditional Peronist ideas, and the reshaping of policies towards a neoliberal model. The effects of these changes on labor politics, workers unions and the Peronist movement itself, will contribute to an understanding of the recovered factories movement in relation to historical workers movements as oppose to the perspective that looks at the factories as a process alienated from historical roots. Furthermore, the analysis of the Menem government will include the divisions and confrontations inside the Peronist movement, mainly concerning conflicting understandings of

the Peronist doctrine and the reinterpretation that the Menem government was attempting and finally applied.

Taking into consideration that labor policies and the positioning of unions influenced the recovered factories, this essay will carefully address the effects of Menem's politics in creating the split inside the General Labor Confederation (CGT in Spanish). The confrontations inside the union over supporting or not the liberalization process led to the creation of the Argentina Workers Confederation (CTA henceforth), challenging not only the monopoly on workers organization but also defying the claim that CGT was the sole representative of Peronist ideals. CTA irrupted into the labor scene with banners based on Peronist conceptions of social justice and the role of the working class in the Argentina political and economic sphere. This coming apart of the union movement was partially the confirmation of lasting divisions inside Peronism between those who defended a leftist tendency- represented by figures like Cook and the Resistencia in the 1970s- and those who preferred to negotiate so as to maintain relative positions of power. Both the CGT and the CTA played a critical role in the development of the *fabrica* movement, and will then be central in the thesis of this essay.

The essay is based on qualitative methods of analysis. It looks into two case studies of the recovered factory movement, and presents a structured comparison with main focus on the role played by the trade union movement in both cases. The qualitative analysis of the two case studies is used as the main source supporting the overall analysis. A section of the essay uses fieldwork research, based on selective interviews in the factories made in June 2008 and July 2009. The core historical analysis of Argentina is based on the use of secondary sources.

Visions, Constructs and Capacities beyond the Capitalist Canon: Case Studies

**Melisa Serrano and Edlira Xhafa
and the GLU Alumni Workers' Alternative Research Team**

Once again, the financial crisis of 2007-2008 blatantly revealed the systemic nature of crisis within capitalism. The so-called structural crises in the modern era of capitalism – the long 'first great depression' of the last quarter of the 19th century, the more concentrated 'Great Depression' of the 1930s, the decade-long 'stagflation' of the 1970s, and the current crisis – have arguably been only the major ones in a system inherently prone to crisis.

In his latest book *The Enigma of Capital* (New York, Oxford University Press), Harvey points out that "financial crises serve to rationalize the irrationalities of capitalism" as "they typically lead to reconfigurations, new models of development, new spheres of investment and new forms of class power" (p. 11). Sure enough, profits of big banks and other financial institutions are back to its pre-crisis record high thanks to the massive state bail-outs. But once again, it is the people who are paying the cost of the crisis through state-enforced austerity measures, cuts on wages and social benefits, and suppression of forms of dissent and rights of people.

Whist people from North to South have been resisting and fighting back an intensifying regime of austerity, there is a growing momentum in recent years to revisit, re-think and renew old discourses on alternatives to neoliberalism and capitalism. These contemporary discourses and debates on alternatives come in the form of visions, principles, frameworks and straightforward strategy prescriptions. Other proposed 'alternative' models appear to be different varieties of 'reformed' capitalism albeit with some egalitarian and democratic dimensions.

The proposed paper aims to contribute to the discourse on alternatives to capitalism by bringing together and establishing a 'dialogue' between theoretical debates on the subject and select meso and micro social experiments and initiatives. Through this 'dialogue', the paper attempts to address the apparent disconnect between macro level theoretical discourses and meso and micro level practices and struggles of people. By doing so, the paper aims to bring these theoretical debates into the perspective of people's practices and struggles that develop their consciousness and capacities to become subjects of transformation, and at the same time, give more visibility to meso and micro initiatives and their potentials.

Through 10 case studies written by alumni of the Global Labour University, the paper documents and critically analyzes how various forms of people's economic and political struggles become spaces or provide opportunities for the development of consciousness and capacities critical to challenge the existing order and pursue projects and initiatives beyond the capitalist canon. Specifically, the paper will:

- a. Identify various forms of people's economic and political struggles that have the potential to become spaces or provide opportunities for the development of consciousness and capacities critical to challenge the existing order and pursue projects and initiatives beyond the capitalist canon;
- b. Identify indicators of critical consciousness and capacities that challenge the existing order and pursue projects and initiatives beyond the capitalist canon;
- c. Describe and analyze the factors and transformational processes involved in the development of critical consciousness and capacities;
- d. Critically analyze factors and variables that influence or affect (facilitate or constrain) the development and sustainability of critical consciousness and capacities; and
- e. Assess the link between consciousness and capacities and the success or failure, and continuity/sustainability or discontinuity (setbacks) of various forms of people's economic and political struggles that challenge the existing order and pursue projects and initiatives beyond the capitalist canon.

A literature review previously done by Melisa Serrano and Edlira Xhafa provides the background and overall framework for the case studies. The case study writers will undertake various field research activities, namely: 1) a review of available information and materials relevant to the initiative or practice (studies, reports, meeting reports, minutes of meetings, documentaries, etc); 2) conversations, interviews and focused group discussions (if required) with actors and people involved in the initiative or practice using an interview schedule as guide (this interview guide should be able to capture much of the elements in the case study structure or outline below); 3) interviews with key informants; 4) participate and make observations of various activities of the initiative/practice/organization being studied; and 5) keeping a regular diary by the researcher of his/her analysis and personal reflections about the initiative (focusing on the effects of the initiative on his/her thinking and previous assumptions).

Worker Co-operatives as Alternative Productive Systems

Sharit K. Bhowmik

Worker cooperatives are industrial or commercial organizations that are owned and controlled by the employees of these organizations. Such cooperatives are fairly recent in India, as compared to their long history in the more developed countries, especially Britain and Europe.

The need for a renewed look at worker co-operatives arises in the present economic context. The process of globalization through structural adjustment has adversely affected the working class throughout the world. Labour in most developing countries has suffered because restructuring of industry has invariably led to unemployment due to closure of 'unprofitable' industrial units. In India, the Industrial Policy Statement placed before Parliament on 24 July 1991 was in tune with the global process of structural adjustment. Two glaring features of this policy are: undermining of the public sector and reduction in employment in the formal sector. Trade unions have by and large opposed these policies. They have organized nation-wide strikes, closures and rallies. All this has had little or no impact on the government's decision making. So far, the only assurance the government has given the trade unions is that its proposed Exit Policy will be deferred. Such a policy would enable large industries to close down without assigning any reasons. This assurance is of little value because even though winding up of large industrial units is not widely prevalent due to existing legislative constraints. Workers continue to lose their jobs through lay-offs, voluntary retirement and out-sourcing by large industries to smaller unorganized ones. Trade unions therefore need to devise alternative means to counteract or circumvent the present trends. Encouraging worker takeovers could be one such means.

The government has shown some interest in encouraging worker takeovers. Paragraph 16 of the Industrial Policy Statement reads: "Workers' participation in management will be promoted. Workers'

cooperatives will be encouraged to participate in packages designed to turn around sick companies.” So far this appears as lip service as the government has taken no step to encourage such cooperatives.

At the same time there are a number of cooperatives that have emerged through the workers’ struggle to maintain employment and production. It is necessary to examine some of these and assess their contribution towards the above two objectives. There are a few instances of such co-operatives that are functioning in different parts of the country especially in the Left ruled states of West Bengal and Tripura in Eastern India (Bhowmik 1992). However there is no definite indication that left-ruled states encourage such ventures. Though Tripura has shown a positive approach towards these organisations, the other two left-ruled states in India, namely, West Bengal and Kerala (in South India) have shown no such inclinations. In fact we find that though there are several instances of workers co-operatives in West Bengal, the government has not officially lent them support in the recent years (see Bhowmik 2002).

There are a few of worker co-operatives in plantations, mines and in industrial units. The workers of Sonali Tea Estate, a tea plantation employing around 500 workers in the Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal, established the first worker co-operative in plantations in 1974. In Tripura five tea plantations are being run successfully by their workers since the early 1980s. In Dalli Rajhara near Bhilai Steel Plant in the state of Chattisgarh in Central India there are around half a dozen worker co-operatives operating in the open cast iron ore mines. In Kolkata (Calcutta) there were at least 20 industrial units that were managed as worker co-operatives since the early 1980s. They could be viewed initially as successful ventures as some of them ran for around twenty years before they closed down for different reasons. There are only a few remaining at present. We shall try and examine the reasons for success or failures of these ventures.

Friday, 30th September 2011

Topic : Labour Ecological Questions

The Perils and promise of ‘Green Capitalism’ for labour

Jacklyn Cock

While the severity of the ecological crisis is generally acknowledged, it is “still not widely recognized as a capitalist crisis, that is as a crisis arising from and perpetuated by the rule of capital, and hence incapable of resolution within the capitalist framework” (Wallis,2010:32). The notion of ‘green capitalism’ obscures this reality. At the same time it is suggested that while there is much empty rhetoric around the notion of ‘green jobs’, renewable energy does contain the possibility of employment creation and benefits to poor households. The paper argues that a focus on renewable energy could promote two important linkages: firstly between local labour and environmental struggles and secondly between the North and the South in the growing climate justice movement.

Decent work and ecological sustainability – a question of distribution?

James Lazou

This paper discusses the challenge of creating decent work while building an environmentally sustainable economy. It is widely argued that the best way to increase employment is through economic growth and associated increased investment. Ecological economics, however, has raised questions about limits to economic growth and the problem of “ecological overshoot,” where society consumes more resources than the world can sustain or reproduce. This paper considers the distribution of decent work and natural resources use in the global economy. In particular it considers whether, environmental limits to growth in GDP make it more difficult to guarantee full and decent employment for everyone who wants and needs it. Does this imply the unpalatable conclusion that there is a global limit on decent employment? Or is a new redistributive model of employment and economics urgently necessary?

In addition to a literature review, the paper explores the global distribution of various environmental measures, in-work poverty and economic activity. Quantitative analyses is based on cross-sectional data for 151 different countries in the World, focusing on the distribution of ecological footprint, bio-capacity and in-work poverty. Results are presented in three main parts: i) a literature review of the main ideas of economic

sustainability from the perspective of the ecological economics; ii) a discussion of the nature of employment, employment creation, job quality and decent work, as well as the employment effect of policies designed to achieve sustainable development; iii) a multivariate analysis of the distribution and relationship of various environmental measures, economic growth and in work poverty. In particular it tests trends of economic and environmental sustainability by comparing various ecological and economic measures including bio-capacity (BC), ecological footprint (EF), CO₂ and other greenhouse emissions, such as methane (CH₄), as well as employment, in-work poverty and economic growth measures; Data was collected from the international organisations and the Global Footprints Network.

Partial results highlight a large disparity between different states in terms of numbers of people in in-work poverty, resource consumption (EF) and GDP. There is no consistent statistical evidence of the relationship between environmental impacts and employment creation. There are suggestions however that the kind of jobs created, both in activity and quality, has an impact on the environment. The paper thus concludes that in order to reduce environmental impacts without damaging the employment, policy makers need to consider more specifically what kind of jobs are being produced in an economy, how work is distributed and a greater focus on job quality and resource distribution.

Meeting Africa's energy needs: the political economy of renewable energy

Sandra van Niekerk

Africa currently has the lowest per capita usage electricity usage of any region in the world. Lack of access is particularly stark in the rural areas, with only 10% of rural dwellers having access. Most electricity is provided by state-owned utilities, although many of these utilities have, over the years, been broken up, and commercialized, and some have been privatised. Most electricity production in Africa relies on large hydropower systems or fossil fuels, including gas-fired power stations operated by private 'independent power producers' under long-term contracts. Diesel generators are increasingly used, both to provide a 'temporary' increase in power supply to the grids, and by businesses and some households who are not connected to the grid. Selling these generators is also a growth business for some multinationals.

At the same time, Africa is rich in sources of renewable energy – including wind, hydro- and solar power. There are various initiatives underway in Africa to tap into renewable energy. Some of these are state-led initiatives, albeit with private sector partners, while others are smaller, more community based initiatives, but some are extremely large projects led by multinational companies. Desertec, for instance, is an initiative led by German electricity multinationals to tap two sources of renewable energy in particular – that of wind and sun – by setting up wind and solar power plants in the deserts of North Africa, to generate electricity for transmission to and distribution in European countries. The promoters claim that this source alone may supply at least 15% of all of Europe's power needs by 2050. The project does not include clear plans on how much of the energy generated will be used to meet demand in Africa. The project is being promoted by the EU through Euromed, which includes north African and EU governments. Trade unions in north Africa are criticising the Desertec project.

This paper will set out a broad overview of the role of the public sector in the provision of energy in Africa, and map the multiple roles of the private sector. It will then focus specifically on the potential of renewable energy to meet Africa's energy needs, the approach taken by various governments towards renewable energy, and the role that the private sector is playing in renewable and other energy initiatives. The response of trade unions towards these renewable energy initiatives, and towards the role of the private sector in energy provision more broadly, will be a particular focus. The paper will include a case study - the Desertec initiative in North Africa. It is envisaged that the paper will fall under the theme "the policy imperative" identified in the Call for Papers.

The paper will draw largely on primary and secondary documentary sources. It will also draw on email interviews/correspondence, particularly with the public sector trade unions in the relevant countries, such as Tunisia.

Organizing the Unorganized Women Workers for Green Livelihood: A Case Study of Self Employed Women's Association, Gujarat, India

Sarbeswara Sahoo

The issues of informal workers in India gain importance only after the initiation of Liberalization – Privatization – Globalization (LPG) strategy in Indian economy. LPG has resulted in informalisation of work force due to voluntary retirements and retrenchment of workers from the government owned public sector enterprises. As a consequence the size of informal workers reached a size of more than 93% of the total workforce. Informal workers are characterized by low income accompanied by employment insecurity and uncertain livelihood, social insecurity responsible for a precarious life. Their working and living conditions lead to very low human development index.

Self Employed Women's Association, Ahmedabad has realized the problems of informal women workers as earlier as in 1972 compared to the Government of India's National Commissions on the Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector. SEWA's endeavor in addressing the issues of women workers in the informal sector is commendable and it has helped in improving the quality of life of thousands of women workers and their family members.

SEWA is a Trade Union registered in the year 1972 with the principal objectives to organize the women engaged in self employment activities like the handicraft and handloom sector, street vendors, the home based workers, rural artisans, salt produces, diamond polishers, and others in the small and micro enterprises. The women can be classified into 'self employed' as well as 'workers involved in the informal work'. In most of the cases they supply essential consumer goods to the society in general and for the poor in particular. The product generated by these informal workers are indispensable as well as have very little side effects like environmental hazards and others that may negatively affect the environment leading to global warming and climate change. SEWA membership has increased to 12, 56,994 especially women workers and membership has spread to 9 Indian States. The Majority of the SEWA members live in the State of Gujarat and that to in the city of Ahmedabad (6, 31,345). SEWA apart from organizing the scores of informal women workers improving their livelihood and social security; it has directly or indirectly directed the workers to involving in alternative production that are eco-friendly. Recently SEWA has taken direct initiatives in earning a livelihood known as Green Livelihood initiatives to take care of the workers as well as the environment on the eve of global warming and climate change. SEWA has numerous livelihood initiatives that are eco-friendly.

The aim of this paper is to document the livelihood initiatives undertaken by SEWA in general and Green Livelihood Initiatives in particular. The paper endeavors to explore the challenges SEWA faced in organizing the women informal workers for green livelihood initiatives and what sorts of arrangement, support is required to make a mass production from these women entrepreneur that in the long run can act as a substitutes to the products produced by large industry having a cost to the environment and climate. This study aims for making a series of focused group discussion (FGDs) with the leaders, executives and workers of SEWA. The study will record information from the elder members regarding relevant issues with the oral history methodology. The study simultaneously will refer the secondary information compiled by SEWA to documents the journey of SEWA movement along with the informal workers.

Friday, 30th September 2011

Topic : Revitalisation of Labour

Analyse to Win : How and why US Unions use strategic research

Joshua Bloom & Chris Tilly

Over the last three decades, there has been a precipitous decline in union density in the United States. At the same time, an optimistic trend has been unions' development of what are called corporate or comprehensive campaigns. In these campaigns, unions mobilize multiple sources of leverage, based on a firm's many stakeholders, to win organizing and contract struggles. As these campaigns have grown in importance, so, too has strategic research by unions to guide such campaigns. Indeed, given the general ineffectiveness of

U.S. labor laws in protecting unions' right to organize, research plays a critical role in union organizing and campaigning in the U.S. today. Though this fact is well known in the labor movement and among scholars studying labor, there has been little systematic research on the new union research.

This paper will summarize the preliminary findings of a research project we are calling Analyze to Win, looking at how and why U.S. unions use strategic research. This is a mixed-method project being carried out by a team of researchers from the University of California Los Angeles, the University of California Berkeley, and Cornell. We hypothesize that research has become increasingly important because neoliberal restructuring has distanced the centers of power in businesses from the reach of shop floor action, via changes like financialization and subcontracting. In extreme cases, the forces controlling a business are hidden. Strategic research allows unions to identify power-holders and their interests and vulnerabilities. Thus, unions can mobilize new forms of leverage to win gains for workers. In our research, we are interested in learning both about the forces driving the growth of strategic research, and about what impact strategic research has on campaign outcomes.

To elaborate, refine, explore, and test our hypotheses, we are employing the following methodologies:

- Analysis of historical case studies of use of research, based on secondary accounts of campaigns
- In-depth case studies of the use of research in recent U.S. union campaigns, based on in-depth interviews with key union actors. We are working on cases from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union (now called UNITE-HERE).
- Statistical analysis of survey data on union campaigns

All three lines of research are ongoing. The proposed paper will provide an overview of findings to date. We believe this proposal is a good fit with the call for work on "new forms of power and leverage." Part of our interest in presenting this work at the GLU is that we are very interested, in discussion, to compare U.S. unions' use of research in organizing with patterns in other countries.

Chinese Workers' Struggles Against the Widening Income Disparity: The Case of Honda Workers' Strike

Elaine Hui

There has been mounting social concern in China over the widening income inequality and wealth gap between the rich and the poor. The Gini coefficient, an indicator of wealth inequality, in the country reached a new height of 0.47, which has exceeded the warning level of 0.4. And in spite of the escalating economic growth of China, the labour share of GDP has plummeted from 56.5% in 1983 to 36.7% in 2005 while the investment share has jumped by 20%.

It is against this socio-economic background that a wave of nation-wide strikes had been ignited in 2010 with the pressing demand of wage increase. And at the end of 2010, a well-known Hong Kong journal, the *Asia Weekly*, has even selected the new generation of Chinese migrant workers to be its "Person of the Year". This reflects that the labour in China has become increasingly agitated under the trend of intensifying income disparity and is more bold in taking actions to advance their interests. One of the foci of this paper is to examine how workers could effectively organize and mobilize themselves in strikes with the illustration of the Honda workers' strike staged in May 2010.

In this paper, attention is also given to the effectiveness of the new policy initiatives of the central and local government, as well as the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) in the wake of the strike wave. The ACFTU has announced a pilot scheme of democratic election of workplace trade union president in ten selected factories. And in August 2010 the Guangdong provincial government had debated the second draft of the Regulations on the Democratic Management of Enterprises while the Collective Consultation Ordinance of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was also under public consultation. This paper will evaluate the effectiveness of these policies and identify the social forces that help close the wage gap in China.

This paper is written on the basis of intensive fieldwork conducted by the author during the Honda workers' strike, as well as extensive archival research. Newspapers, leaflet and online discussion produced by strikers, documents and reports issued by the ACFTU, the local and central government and other organizations are analyzed.

Alternative Governments in South America: Labour policies and relations with the trade union movement

Daniel Hawkins

This paper offers an overview of the emergence and consolidation of “alternative” governments in five South American countries (Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Brazil) in the past decade, paying particular attention to the diverse forms in which organized labour, as well as other social movements, has related to these new national governments. The paper provides an historical approach, tracing the manner in which two regional crises – the military dictatorships of the 1960s-1980s and the neoliberal turn of the 1980s-1990s – laid the bases for the political transformations leading to the election of these five progressive governments, as well as unearthing the heterogeneities of each local context that assured that the concrete governments and State-society structures of each country would lead to very different electoral processes and significantly distinct governance actions of the respective governments.

More than merely offering a broad sketch of the general State programs of each government (in terms of macro-economic policies and institutional configurations), the paper focuses on the nature of the national government-trade union relationship in each country, both before and since the emergence of the five parties in power, analyzing the extent of organized labour's impact on State policy and the degree to which new constellations of political power may have restructured both trade union action (in terms of autonomy vis-à-vis the State and organizational capacity) as well as trade union ideologies.

In line with such analyses, the following questions will be pondered over: To what extent has each government instituted policies and political programs that benefit the working class and more specifically, trade union representation, activity and political power? Was the trade union movement a key actor in the emergence of these *leftist-leaning* governments and if so, how has its closeness to the government led to a reconfiguration within labour organizations themselves, perhaps restructuring the very practices and visions of these organizations? Why are there such differences between the predominant union federations/confederations and their relationships with their respective governments in these five countries. As a broad illustration, on the one hand, we witnessed the antagonistic tug-of-war between the Chávez Government, elected in 1998, and the *Confederación de Trabajadores Venezolanos* (CTV), resulting in a profound fractioning of organized labour in the country. On the other hand, we have the Uruguayan and Brazilian cases where the *Confederacion Nacional de Trabajadores* (CNT) and, in the Brazilian case, the trade union movement collectively, were fundamental actors behind the creation and growth of the political parties that finally managed to attain national governmental rule, in 2005 under Tabaré Vázquez, in Uruguay, and in 2003 under Lula da Silva, in Brazil.

The paper will offer an overview of the principal achievements of the five respective governments regarding the advancement of progressive labour policies as a means of evaluating and comparing each government based on the degree of their “pro-labour” stance. Finally, the paper will offer key critiques of the limitations of these government policies, proposing where they could have indeed done more and also, where organized labour (and indeed, informal labour organizations or movements) could have applied more pressure and obtained better results for their country's workers.

The paper, as noted, undertakes a historical material theoretical perspective which highlights the manner in which specific conjunctures overdetermine what Gramsci termed the “limits of the possible” for State-societal transformations. In such a perspective, institutions (in their broad Gramscian understanding) are focal points for social struggles (economic, political and indeed, ideological-cultural). Labour organizations, depending on their historical and geographical particularities can become key institutions that help to significantly alter the balance of power within the State and in the degree to which it impacts on the broader

society. The paper combines this perspective with a comparative analyses of the five governments and their relationships vis-à-vis labour organizations as a means of illustrating key differences between each regime, always with the “labour question” taking the centre stage. As a matter of selection, the author also offers a brief section in which he argues why these five countries were selected and not other South American countries which some may bundle in the group: “alternative governments”.

The paper is a summary of a much broader research project, carried out by myself, into Alternative Governments in South America and their relationship to trade unions, undertaken in 2010 for the National School of Trade Unionism of Colombia (*Escuela Nacional Sindical-ENS*).

What are skills?

Matseleng Allais

In South Africa, policy development for education and training, and specifically that component of education which is referred to as ‘skills development’, has been considerably influenced by trade unions. Arguably, the input from labour into policy development has been far greater here than is the case in most countries around the world. To what extent are the resulting policies ‘pro-working class’? This paper provides a critical analysis of ‘skills development’ in South Africa. The methodology is two-pronged. The first part consists of a meta-analysis of research into technical and vocational education and training and skills development in South Africa. The second is a critical analysis of policies in these areas, located in a consideration of international policy trends. This paper presents analysis from the first stage of a larger research project which aims to develop better theoretical understandings of workplace and professional knowledge in targeted occupations, as well as contribute to ongoing policy development in the area. Part of its aim is identifying the key issues for further research.

Research into technical and vocational education and training and skills development in South Africa is not well-developed. It is generally accepted that apartheid has left the historical imprint of a racialized ‘low skills regime’. There is thus emphasis on the vulnerability of ‘low-skilled’ individuals in the labour market, and on improving skills levels to improve individuals’ life-chances and the nation’s productivity and prosperity. Much research has focused on trying to understand the ‘skills gap’—the areas in which training interventions are required in order to improve economic performance. There is some empirical work which tracks learners’ pathways from formal education and training into the workplace. There are some small-scale studies of specific training interventions, and of training in specific workplaces or occupational areas. The literature on workplace-learning is heavily influenced by ideas about social and situated learning. There is some research which critiques policy interventions. Here, the main lines of argument tend to be that policy and structures have been overly bureaucratized and that this has accordingly disempowered workers from participation, and has led to inefficiencies and lack of delivery. There have been many critiques of the National Qualifications Framework, some of which have examined the ways in which it has affected technical and vocational education and training. Bodies of literature which are under-explored include sociological literature which examines how notions of ‘skilled’ labour are shaped by the nature of the labour market; literature which explores the relationship of the state and economy to particular regimes of vocational education and training, such as the ‘varieties of capitalism’ literature; literature which explores the relationships between education and training and the labour market more broadly than the ‘human capital’ approach which is explicit or implicit in much South African research and policy; and research into the nature of craft, workplace, and professional knowledge, including the conditions and possibilities of their development and transmission.

This leads to the second half of the paper, which provides a different perspective on policy critiques. I draw on drawing a conceptual framework derived from both political economy and epistemology. I provide a brief overview of South Africa’s ‘skills’ policies since 1994, and an in-depth analysis of the policies currently in place. I suggest that the broader political and economic environment has intensified the commodification of education and training. This has happened with the participation of labour, using terminology and in some cases policy which appear to be progressive or pro-poor. This leads me to some reflections on what pro-working class education and training policy could look like, and how it could be developed, as well as some suggestions for key research questions which need to be addressed in this regard.

Scoring an Own Goal? The Construction Workers' 2010 World Cup Strike

Eddie Cottle

The nationwide strike by 70 000 construction workers between 8 and 15 July 2009 was unprecedented and significant in several respects. This was the first *national* strike on 2010 World Cup sites by South African construction workers and was therefore a historic event. A second key feature of the strike was the unity displayed by workers and trade unions within a sector organised by several trade unions. Engineering and building workers came out on strike, with the Building, Construction & Allied Workers' Union (BCAWU) and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) standing together as their representative organisations. A third feature of the strike was the widespread support it mobilised from the South African public and media. This was despite it potentially setting back progress on World Cup projects. Fourthly, the pressure placed upon the trade union negotiating team by the Ministry of Labour and the FIFA Local Organising Committee (LOC) proved lethal in undermining their demands and demobilising the national strike.

Friday, 30th September 2011

Topic : Politics of Labour

The Politics of (under)development in Nepal: Role of Civil Society (Trade Union) and Political Parties

Chandra D. Bhatta

Trade union as a part of civil society has a duty to protect citizens from economic power of the market and political power of the state. In other words, they are required to counter the destructive logics of the capitalism by altering the balance of power (both economic and political) away from capital, bureaucracy, and political parties toward broader society. But this has not been the case in Nepal. During 1990s both trade unions, which are an agent of change, and the broader civil society for their parts, failed to push for the development. By contrast, they either diffused with market or with political society (political parties included). In many occasions trade unions have radicalized the labour force, and broader civil society, for its part, the amorphous mass - to fulfill their vested interests.

Moreover, there was and is no clear boundary in Nepal as where the role of trade union and civil society begin and where it ends. Due to this fussiness, they have failed to discharge their duties thereby resulting Nepali state to adopt neoliberal policies in spite of constitutional provisions to have a welfare state for the creation of an egalitarian society. This approach has produced more losers than the winners. Rather than bridging the class gaps, Nepali state produced more classes which ultimately overthrew the whole political system out of gear. In fact it is not only the economic activity that produced inequality and underdevelopment but the political decisions that are made, too, have their fair amount of share to this end, if they are not corrected in time.

By analysing the role of the trade unions, the broader civil society, and their nexus with other components such as the chamber of commerce, political parties, and the state - this paper will argue that they have failed to democratize economic power of the state and push for the development primarily because they are neither autonomous from the political society nor from the business community. In many occasions, they are co-opted either by the political parties or by the state resulting them not being able to alter the balance of state power in favour of labour, poor, and powerless. Nepali state today has become a rentier state. The paper will also recommend that trade unions, and civil society groups need to be autonomous from the dominant organs of the state, if they want to have positive impact of their work in society, be it development or globalization with human face.

Labour movement and Pro-Marginalized Group Policies: Building network of movements in the politics of local policy making process.

Hari Nugroho

Workers and the labour movement in Indonesia are now dealing with new local opportunity structure resulted by the combination of the practice of neo-liberal labour reform and the politics of decentralization. The combination, in the one hand, creates structures which intensify commodification and exclusion of workers especially in the industrial regions. On the other hand, decentralization, however, also provides alternative opportunities to the workers' involvement in the politics of the local policy making process. Some elements of the labour movements have constructed new meanings to such opportunities as an alternative way to cope with the uncertainties of the working conditions and the erosion of labour movement due to the flexibility regime. By benefiting from such conditions, workers and the unions attempt to build a more extensive network that connect them to other types of social movements that can lead them to an active involvement in the politics of local policy making process especially the pro-marginalized policies. This paper seeks to discuss critically about changing social and political arena of the labour movement in the current political economy structure. The whole discussions in the paper are taken from the study that is being conducted in two industrial regions in Indonesia by using qualitative approach.

Trade Unions and the Labour politics in Uganda

Moses Musiitwa

Uganda's trade unions were given legal recognition by the British colonial administration in 1952. In 1993 the unionization of public services was legally permitted, which brought the number of trade unions in Uganda to 17. All unions are legally obliged to affiliate with the highly centralized National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU) and Confederation of Free Trade Unions- (COFTU) which are part of a tripartite negotiating structure involving the Federation of Ugandan Employers (FUE) and the Minister of Labor. Although the government supports workers' rights conventions promoted by the International Labor Organization (ILO), trade unions are ineffective in Uganda. This is in part due to a lack of unity amongst workers as they work 2 or more jobs, and are subject to ethnic, regional, and gender divides.

Also, trade unions and other workers' movements have had their powers reduced by the government, and individual workers are often tied to large commercial farms by the provision of normally very poor accommodation, a small plot of land for subsistence, and low wages. Though meager, without these limited resources the worker is lost, hence the space for challenging employers is limited. In light of this situation, although the power of trade unions has been historically low in Uganda, it is no surprise that they are now a virtually a **low rated** lobby group.

This paper examines union members' evaluation of the relevance of unions and their identification with a traditional collective value frame for union action. It seeks to take account of the impact of increasing labor market heterogeneity, declining instrumentality, and the behavior of unions and employers. Using Uganda data from individual union members and their local union leaders and comparative data gathered, from apex bodies in neighboring countries, the paper wants to find whether new labor market identities are not linked to weaker belief in the relevance of unions but are associated with weaker identification with the traditional value frame.

Although hostile employer behavior are associated with greater identification with traditional value frames, greater union democracy is associated with less membership disaffection on both the relevance of unions and their collective modes of action. Union democracy & politics are therefore found to be a key tool to address membership disaffection and to generate collective identities for any union project.

Lula's Hegemony and Brazilian Labor Relations: The Case of Call Centers and Their Unions

Ruy Braga

The uncommonly high approval ratings of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government, which guaranteed Dilma Rousseff's victory in the 2010 presidential elections, clearly stimulated the Brazilian sociological imagination: what are the bases of the current Lulist hegemony? Undoubtedly, one of the most important contributions to the debate over the so-called "Lulism" has been by André Singer in a famous 2009 article. According to Singer's well-known argument, beginning in May, 2005, during the scandalous "Mensalão" (the monthly backhander) period, where members of parliament bought votes, Lula's government would have lost to the PSDB (Tucano opposition) an important number of supporters won over in 2002 from the urban middle-class. Attracted by government-promoted public policies, however, low-income Brazilian voters, traditionally not in favor of Lula, would have warmed to the PT program during the 2006 campaign and, in a movement known in political science as electoral realignment, decided to solidly side with the governing candidate, thereby guaranteeing his victory.

Comparing electoral research for 2002 and 2006, Singer offered vast proof regarding this realignment, and demonstrated that a vote for Lula in 2006 was widely a "popular" vote, whereas the opposing candidate, Geraldo Alckmin, would have been preferred by the middle and upper classes. This approximation between Lula and the PT in relation to those disqualified, underpaid workers deprived of prestige, otherwise known as the *sub-proletarian* class, led Singer to identify in Brazil the revival of a phenomenon genealogically associated with the rich history of *Latin-American populism*. To give you an idea, Singer understands sub-proletarians as those who receive up to one minimum wage and half of those who had a salary of up to two minimum wages. According to this criterion, 63% of the Brazilian proletariat consisted of sub-proletarians. Here is the hypothesis: *Lulism would be the ideological expression of a class fraction supposedly incapable of constructing autonomous forms of organization that would instead look to the State for the path par excellence to reducing social inequality*. Our aim here will be to test this hypothesis in the light of the analysis of one of the sub-proletarian groups which grew the most in the last decade: telemarketing operators, or teleoperators.

Friday, 30th September 2011

Topic : Restructuring : Labour & Work

The Spatial Restructuring of Work and Maquiladoras of the Automotive Industry

Fidelma Murphy

The spatial restructuring of work and fragmentation of work activities across borders is an ongoing and expanding process in the current global neoliberal environment. Cross-border ownership is increasingly commonplace with corporate locational decisions principally informed by considerations of heterogeneity of place.

Cross-border capital mobility is a clear consequence of the globalisation process. Social Structures of Accumulation (SSA) theory provides a useful perspective for placing globalisation in an historical and institutional context and tracing its consequences for spatially-bound workers. Political economy concerns with globalisation focus on its role in the transformation of labour processes and the containment of class conflict.

The spatialization school places special emphasis on the manner in which SSAs produce differential labour outcomes at local levels in explainable ways. The ongoing spatial restructuring of work is part of a larger globally-based labour control strategy. A reliance on strategic differentiation across locations is fundamental as the more and greater are differences in the organisation of work, the more the potential for worker solidarity is eroded. The degree of differentiation is influenced by corporations' ability to consciously implement preferred functional differences and to actively exploit existing ones in the local environment.

The paper takes the Mexican maquiladora automotive industry as an operational example of cross-border spatialization. It asks if and how the organisational capacity of its labour is undermined by: 1) consciously constructed functional differences abetted by technocratic control and flexible production systems and; 2) the active exploitation of existing local differences. The industry's immersion in the global neoliberal environment is evidenced by the diffusion of social and technical controls at maquiladora plant-level through computerised standardisations and parameters; the implementation of flexible accumulation systems; attacks on unions; flexibilisation of employment contracts and out/off-sourcing. The implementation of these controls is heavily dependent on the specifics of place, while the specifics of place themselves can serve as additional, pre-existing sources of differentiation. Based on findings from semi-structured interviews and a case study of Ford Motor Company across multiple plant sites; a conceptualisation of strategic differentiation is developed - four key forms that corporations engage in at local levels and the impact of each on workers' positions in not just the local but the global economy.

A literature review on the causes of outsourcing: economic efficiency, profit or class struggle?

Nicolas Pons-Vignon

This paper will look at the literature on outsourcing and so-called atypical labour arrangements, with a view to establishing whether it can shed light on the situation the forestry sector in South Africa. Much of the business-oriented literature emphasizes the positive role of outsourcing as it increases specialization and, as a result, efficiency. This would imply that companies should outsource 'non core' functions; yet, in the case of forestry and of numerous other sectors and companies, core functions are also outsourced. In fact, in the case of forestry in South Africa, research indicates that outsourcing has had an overall negative impact on production and productivity, leading to supply problems for downstream industries (in particular sawmilling). In the Marxist literature on the labour process, however, the rationale for outsourcing is explained in terms of the labour-capital struggle. Two main explanations dominate: that outsourcing (and other atypical forms of employment) allow capitalists to extract more profit – a view which can only be supported by evidence in the SA forestry sector if one takes a very short-term view on profit, which is coherent with the broader literature on the shift to financialised capitalism. Another stream of literature, which could be traced back to the Brighton labour process group (Friedman, 1977) and to the debates surrounding H. Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1998), insists on the centrality of responsible autonomy (vs. direct control) as a contingent but essential form of labour organization aimed at asserting capital's power and authority. This latter view is coherent with other literature showing that the primary motive for recent changes in the labour process under neoliberalism have to do with power and control, rather than strictly with profit (for an example related to the 'revolution' linked to SAP and Oracle-type software, see Hall, 2005).

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Explaining Why Labour Unions Have Failed Bangladesh's Garment Workers

Zia Rahman & Tom Langford

Bangladesh has been part of the globalized readymade garment (RMG) industry since the early 1980s. In 2008-09 there were 4,825 RMG factories in Bangladesh employing 3.1 million people. Bangladesh's RMG industry has flourished because its workers are among the lowest paid garment workers in the world. Yet labour unions in Bangladesh largely ignored the RMG sector in the 1980s and efforts at unionization since 1990 have been very limited. This paper provides an historical explanation for why labour unions have

failed Bangladesh's garment workers over the past 30 years. It is based upon research conducted for the first author's Ph.D. dissertation, completed in early 2010 at the University of Calgary. The dissertation combines extensive documentary research with in-depth interviews with labour union officials and industrial relations experts in Dhaka in 2007. A brief outline of the argument follows.

Unions first developed in Bangladesh in the jute and cotton-textile industries during the British colonial period. Such unions provided stability for the colonial enterprises. However the Indian/Bangladeshi unions soon became part of the broader anti-colonial movement dominated by left and nationalist political parties. Here we see a particular type of politicization of labour unions such that factory-based trade unionism was virtually absent and unions were key organizations on the national political stage.

The political unionism, especially by the left political parties, and the labour unions' prominence in the jute and textile industries continued even after the end of colonial rule. However the tradition of left political unionism was challenged in the 1960s by the military dictator, General Ayub Khan. He introduced factory-level unionism as part of an anti-communist campaign and to extend the military regime's hegemony over the working class. After Bangladesh's independence in 1971, all of the industries were nationalized. This led to the politicization of all labour unions by the ruling party, a pattern that was pervasive during the two major military regimes that existed between 1975 and 1990. Whereas the leftist parties had used politicized unions to promote their oppositional political agendas, the ruling parties used politicized unions to stabilize their hold on power.

During the first military regime after independence, the country's nationalized economic policy was abandoned in favour of a neoliberalism that flourished during the second military regime led by General Ershad. It was during this period in the 1980s that garment manufacturing began to shift to Bangladesh. The labour movement was incapable of mounting organizing drives at this point. During the period of military dictatorship, many of the radical political unions had been replaced by unions attached to the ruling party: corruption, nepotism and the development of a self-interested labour aristocracy defined these new unions. This situation created a very negative image of labour unionism among urban, educated citizens and civil society groups and as a result the conscience constituency for progressive labour union activism was very small. At the same time, because of the neoliberal economic policy introduced by the military regimes, the private sector became the engine of growth and private entrepreneurs absolutely prohibited union activities. Furthermore the mass media propagated both the ruling elites' views and the sentiments of the urban educated middle class in favour of union-free development of the RMG industry. In addition the state indirectly patronized the private owners by not enforcing regulations on labour standards.

The paper will conclude by assessing the future of independent, active unionism in the RMG industry in light of the massive wave of protest by garment workers in 2006 and the continuing major loss of life by workers in recurring factory fires.

Friday, 30th September 2011

Topic : Labour & Rural Issues

Unfree Labour & Neoliberal Regimes of Accumulation in Indian Agrarian Systems

Kaustav Banerjee

A peculiar feature of backwardness in Indian agrarian systems is the existence of unfree labour relations. The theoretical concept of unfree labour helps in addressing the following two crucial questions. Firstly, what is the relevance of unfree labour in capitalist accumulation especially in backward agrarian systems? Secondly, what is the source and history of such unfreedom? The first question assumes relevance because capitalism is generally associated with the universal idea of freedom and free wage labour in particular. In other words, capitalism is generally assumed to be the epoch which breaks with the past unfree labour relations (like feudalism, slavery) and brings into existence free wage labour. The debate on unfree labour can be classified into three schools of thought – the neoclassical school which equates capitalism with free

wage labour only. Second, a variant of the Marxist school which recognises the existence of unfree labour but looks upon it as a vestigial carryover from pre/non capitalist modes. The third which is also a variant of the Marxist school, which argues that unfree labour is very much part of capitalist accumulation and not just a remnant of previous modes. I use the method of political economy to examine how the notion of unfreedom is being produced and reproduced in agrarian systems under neo-liberal regimes of accumulation.

I start with a case study of Santhal Parganas to highlight some features of unfreedom in agrarian systems. Then I use data from NSS 61st, 55th, 50th rounds on Employment/ Unemployment, Census data and primary data collected across 6 of the most backward districts in 4 states of Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh to demonstrate unfree labour relations under neoliberal regimes of accumulation in India today. Once I can establish that unfree labour relations is very much present today in different forms, I try and trace its existence backwards. In a sense, in keeping with the method of present as history which leads me to look at how labour was unfree in the past. Unfree labour forms the structural basis of exploitation in the system of castes. Agrestic servitude and caste obligatory labour have a long history in Indian agrarian systems. Socially constructed categories of caste and gender exacerbate unfreedom. I conclude this paper with the study of the exploitation of women's labour and the unfreedom therein.

Land Tenure, Smallholder Agricultural Production and Unemployment in two villages in the former Ciskei

Mazibuko K. Jara & Dr. Neeta Misra

The proposed paper will be a working paper based on ongoing multi-disciplinary field research taking place in two former Ciskeian homeland villages, these being Rabula and Zanyokhwe. The research has two legs: i) a livelihoods and employment survey; and ii) a qualitative research leg focusing on the intersections between rural governance, development and democracy. The proposed working paper will answer this core research question: what are the actual dynamics of and intersections between land tenure, smallholder agricultural production and unemployment in the two villages? In light of post-apartheid economic, land and agrarian reform, rural development, rural governance and local government laws and policies, this question raises important issues for academic and policy debates. Whilst still focused on the core research question, the paper will be sensitive to, and briefly relate to these broader debates.

Shaped by the colonial and apartheid past of discrimination and inequality, these two villages are today marked by chronically high levels of unemployment, underdevelopment and poverty. With the collapse of the influx control system in the mid-1980s, for over two and a half decades now the two villages have also experienced a net outward migration of young people looking for economic opportunities in urban centres. At the same time, rising structural unemployment in urban areas and complex cultural urban-rural connections have meant circular migratory patterns between the two villages and the key urban centres that receive migrants from the two villages. Some of the retrenched workers returned to their rural homes in the two villages where they had used urban incomes to accumulate livestock, and invest in housing, fields and even tractors. Arguably, the village home base therefore serves some of these retrenched workers with a better landing and cushion than those entirely dependent on cash-dependent urban livelihoods.

Post-apartheid local government had promised much: local economic development, integrated development planning and the dismantling of apartheid geographies and socio-political systems. With various challenges and crises affecting the associated Amahlathi Local Municipality and the Amathole District Municipality these two villages have seen very little of these promises. To this day, the overwhelming majority of families and households depend on remittances from relatives with a footing in urban centres. Social security grants for the elderly, child support and the disabled are also a crucial form of income and livelihood support. Despite the relative availability of both communal and private land in the two villages, as well as the provision of some agricultural support and ongoing "agricultural projects", for the overwhelming majority of dwellers in the two villages agriculture seems to play a minimal role as an income earner and in providing subsistence. The livelihoods and employment survey will test the extent to which these hypotheses hold in the two villages. Further, the survey will also seek to lay the basis for possible employment-creating interventions.

The rural local government and socio-economic crises in the two villages has been compounded by the legislated return of traditional leadership institutions which contest space with rural civil society and elected municipal representatives over the control of (both communal and privately held land), development and structures for rural governance. The governance, development and democracy leg of the research will draw out and analyse evidence in this regard.

By presenting the two villages as case studies, the paper will engage and intersect with broader academic and labour debates about the integration of post-apartheid rural labour into a globalised South African economy and related social and economic trends. The paper will also be located within a wider Eastern Cape provincial and South African national context: policy and economic imperatives, the recent emergence of rural organisations in the Eastern Cape with implications for rethinking social formation and alliances between rural (largely unemployed) and urban labour, and the role of work, employment and sustainable livelihoods in rural development.

Methodology

Starting in February 2011, the livelihoods and employment survey will be a quantitative research project based on a questionnaire administered to a sample of 150 households in Rabula and Zanyokhwe. This will be supplemented by desk-top research and in-depth interviews with key informants. The qualitative governance and democracy research, which started in April 2010, has been based on in-depth interviews with key informants, focus group discussions with identified groups (women, traditional leaders, members of traditional councils, men and youth), and desk-top research surveys. This will continue. The two lead researchers will also spend significant time in developing a common analysis and write-up in order to develop a coherent synthesis of the multi-disciplinary foci of the research project.

Peasant Development in Contemporary Capitalism

Ely Fair

My master's thesis delved into issues of peasant development in contemporary capitalism. My research for the conference would follow this line, deepening the ground-work laid by my last year's work. I regret here to offer two paths that this exploration could follow- it is my hope that after reading the remainder of this proposal it will be clear why both options have been presented before you.

1. Classical Marxism predicted the demise of the peasantry, yet despite massive urban growth throughout the world, the number of peasants continues to rise. Rooted in Marxist theory, labour movements have ignored the strength and virility of local peasant populations. As the space between the country-side and the urban environment blurs- with ever increasing circular migration and ever expansive peri-urban sprawl- the importance of developing cross-class coalitions is all the more tangible.

As a necessary first step, peasant studies must be taken out of the anthropological tradition and placed squarely within a dialectic political economy. Utilizing a global comparative methodology, I hope to illuminate the roll of peasants within contemporary capitalism and, in so doing, incite a dialogue and debate between industrial and peasant people's movements. This analysis will include a discussion of: the neo-liberal food regime; peasant population and demographic trends; peasant class structure; contemporary regional and global rural struggles; and the necessity/difficulty of a peasant-proletariat coalition.

Due to the breadth of subject matter and the global focus, many nuances will be over looked. But given the, near complete, lack of discussion within the labour movement it is necessary to begin with a broad brush. Unions have awoken to the need for coalition building, but few have begun the work of reaching out to their rural counterparts. Without an applicable theoretic model it is difficult for leaders and workers alike to bridge the divide between the classes.

This paper is currently being edited for publication as a working paper by GLU Germany.

2. Both Marx and Lenin misinterpreted the true nature of the peasantry in capitalism. They predicted the steady demise and ultimate disillusion of this class. The history of capitalism has instead been one of massive declines and growths in the peasantry. Clearly, the value of the peasant class has varied significantly for capital; yet no unifying theory has attempted to account for these sharp reversals in peasants' fate.

By exploring, the class value of the peasantry within capitalism I hope to lend insight into the nature of class agency in capitalism generally and in neo-liberalism particularly. My preliminary work on this issue indicates the growing institutional strength of the peasantry in many parts of the world. If this hypothesis holds it has deep implications for all those that fight for change within the agriculturally dominated third-world.

Beyond the immediate goal of discerning the relational strength of peasant populations, a contemporary evaluation of power within and between classes will lend insight into the appropriate steps for the industrial laboring class.

These studies have significant overlap and some portion of both will be included in the other. It seems to me that the second proposal fits more closely with the announced intentions of the conference, being an investigation into power and leverage. Yet, the first study is by no means outside of the broad scope of interest. The first paper topic is already being prepared as a working paper and its inclusion, as such, may more fully highlight the recent accomplishments of the network. I hope it is clear why I have chosen to include both courses for your consideration. Thank you for your time and continued commitment to the GLU network.